REVIEWS ESSENTIAL FENDER, HOFNER, ITALIA, ACG, EHX AND TONETECH BASS GEAR REVIEWED AND RATED!

Bass Guitar Magazine

THE ...UMBER ONE BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

TOWER OF POWER'S ROCCO PRESTIA

Tips for killer bass playing from the funk master!

65 KILLER PAGES OF ESSENTIAL BASS INSPIRATION

INTERVIEWS

GLENN HUGHES
Black Country Communion

KLAUS FLOURIDE
Dead Kennedys

SNOW OWL

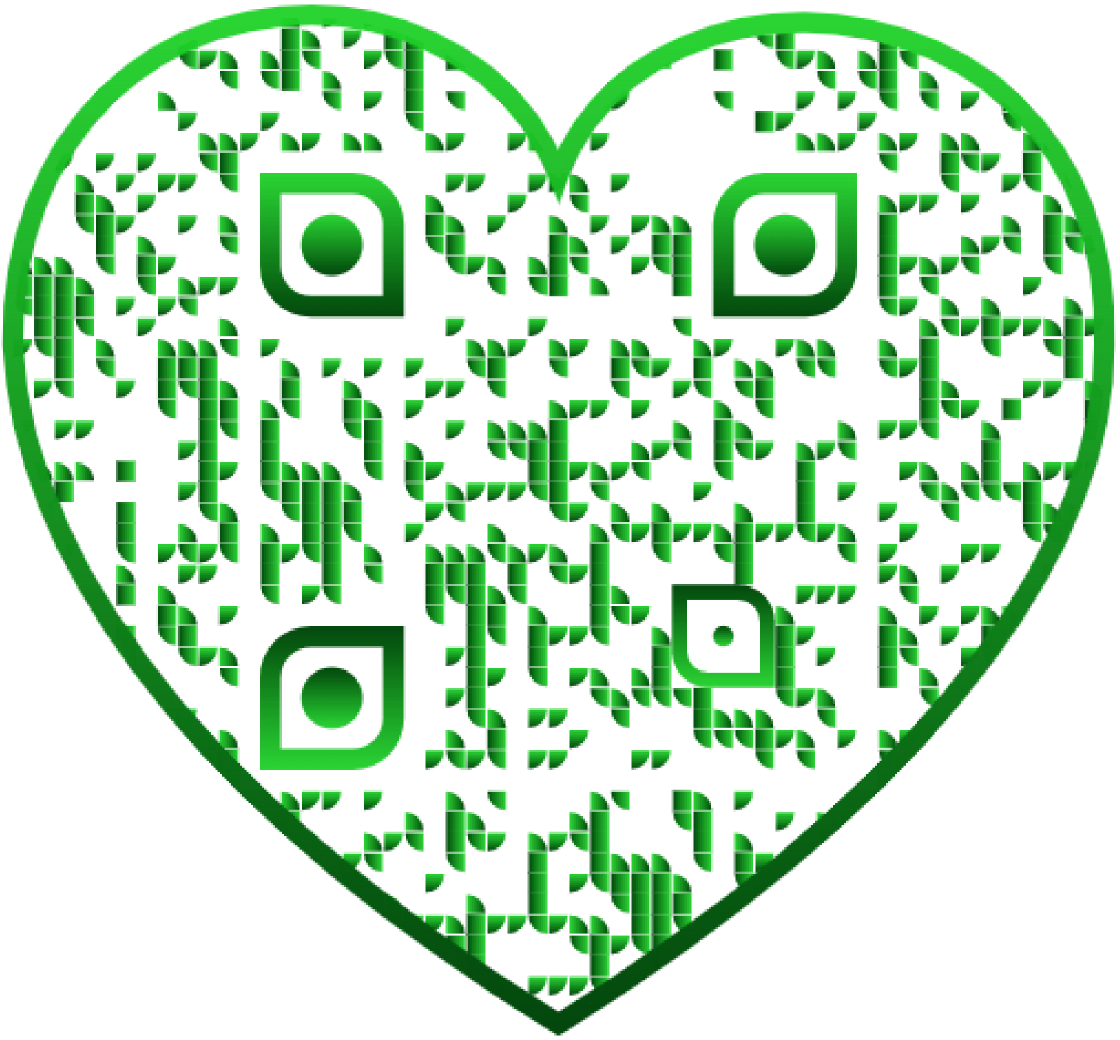
NEIL MURRAY

...AND 12 MORE KILLER BASSISTS

ON TEST

FLEA'S SIGNATURE FENDER JAZZ!

Future



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CONTENTS
ISSUE 148 OCTOBER 2017

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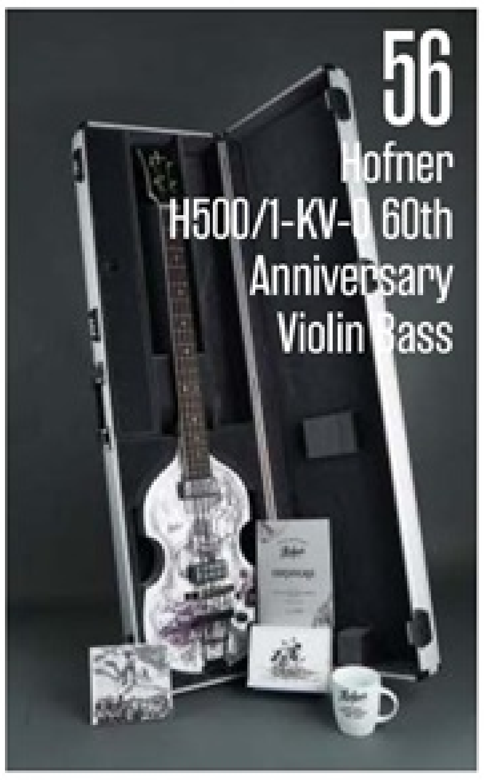
Some bass players have skills that defy explanation. Others have a grasp of the groove that defeats understanding. Very few have both, but this issue's cover star Francis 'Rocco' Prestia has both in abundance. With his band Tower Of Power about to arrive in the UK for live dates as you read this, we decided that there was no better time to get the great man on the cover. Read and learn – we did!

We've packed the magazine you're holding with more bass stars than ever, ranging from (deep breath): the great Glenn Hughes, a man whose heritage as a bassist needs little explanation; punk icon Klaus Flouride (Geoffrey Lyall to his accountant); headbangers Tony Dolan and Dan Pugsley; rocker Neil Murray, whose CV as bassist with the great and the good would literally fill this magazine; the mighty Snow Owl, whose mission to spread the bass word goes way beyond mere music; Bill Clements, who has overcome trials that would defeat the rest of us; and Shonna Tucker, Alonza Bevan and Dmitry Lisenko, each of whom brings unique wisdom to the *BGM* table. That's quite the stellar cast.

Elsewhere, we road-test amazing bass guitars from Italia, Hofner, Fender and ACG, ranging in outlay from a relatively modest £779 to a bank manager-endangering £6150. We also stamp on an EHX preamp, snap on a killer new bridge design and let loose the mighty Trio Of Doom (Steve Lawson, Stuart Clayton and Phil Mann) for the best bass tuition available in the known world. Have at it, and I'll see you next time!

Joel McIver, editor



Gear

48 Italia Maranello Cavo
It's green. It's glittery. It's gagging to be played, says Joel McIver

52 Fender Flea Signature Jazz
Mike Brooks readies his 'combat thumb'

56 Hofner H500/1-KV-0 60th Anniversary Violin Bass
Unusual, lightweight and extremely expensive (but that's enough about writer Mike, ho ho).

60 ACG Salace E-Type
Alan Cringean's latest ace bass under Brooksy's scrutiny

64 Electro-Harmonix Battalion Preamp/DI
McIver stamps on another luscious EHX

66 Sever Innovations Tone Up Bass Bridge
Kev Sanders road-tests a slinky bit of Euro-hardware

22
Francis 'Rocco' Prestia, Tower Of Power

32
Glenn Hughes, Black Country Communion

34
Snow Owl

Bassists

22 Francis 'Rocco' Prestia, Tower Of Power
The funkiest bassist ever? Quite possibly! On the eve of Tower Of Power's UK dates, Rocco Prestia sits down with Joel McIver for a frank chat about almost 50 years spent at the low end

28 Glenn Hughes, Black Country Communion
The mighty Glenn Hughes returns with the much-missed Black Country Communion and a new level of creativity after a period of personal chaos. Mike Brooks asks the questions

34 Klaus Flouride, Dead Kennedys
The man born Geoffrey Lyall reminds us why we should not call him 'sir'. Joe Shooman meets the punk-rock legend

34 Snow Owl
Colombian bass genius Juan Garcia-Herreros, aka Snow Owl, talks to Kate Puttick about his new scholarship opportunity. Budding bass students, do not miss this

36 Dmitry Lisenko
Latvian acoustic bass percussionist Lisenko on his rise to low-frequency prominence. Interview: Hywel Davies

38 Shonna Tucker
Southern soul bassist Shonna talks groove with Alison Richter

39 Bill Clements
Our man Davies meets the super-dedicated bassist extraordinaire Bill Clements...

40 Dan Pugsley, Skindred
...before entering the 'Newport Helicopter' with Monsieur Pugsley

41 Alonza Bevan, Kula Shaker
It's like Britpop never went away, says Mike Brooks

44 Neil Murray, Snakecharmer
The great rock bassist Murray chats about life beyond *We Will Rock You*. Brooks listens

46 Tony Dolan, Venom Inc
Metallic mayhem with 'Demolition Man' Dolan

Tuition

70 Frontline
Four pro bassists offer you their collective wisdom. Get smart here

BEGINNER
74 Steve Lawson
The great Steve Lawson guides us through a beginners' bass journey like no other. Get those fingers flexing and let's go!

INTERMEDIATE
78 Stuart Clayton
Feeling ready to take the next step? Meet Commander Clayton, your guide through intermediate bass territory

ADVANCED
84 Phil Mann
Up for some bass Armageddon? Of course you are! Buckle up, Captain Phil Mann is at the controls for our advanced tuition section...

90 Classic Albums
Mike Brooks gives INXS a *Kick*-ing. See what we did there?

SUBSCRIBE NOW
DETAILS PAGE 82

THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

© MichaelWeintrob

THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR FUNKIN'

The sometime James Brown and Parliament/Funkadelic bassist Bootsy Collins, a living legend in our world, returns with his first album in six years on October 27. Titled *World Wide Funk*, the album features a host of guest musicians such as Public Enemy rapper Chuck D, guitarist Buckethead (not to be confused at any costs with the recent General Election's 'Lord Buckethead'), MC Doug E. Fresh and the late P-Funk organist Bernie Worrell. The renowned bassist Alissia Benveniste is Bootsy's co-producer. The songs, Bootsy's first since 2011's *Tha Funk Capital Of The World*, were recorded at his Cincinnati home.

Asked about the album, Bootsy was quoted brilliantly as follows: "The 'One' kindly gave me the Funk Finger and showed me this World Wide Funkateer Drive going on out here, and he said 'all you have to do is un-dress it'. So I waved my hands in the air and gave up the funk like I just didn't care. Then out of the clear blue, my man Brother-Nature showed up to announce that This is the Year of the Funkateer! The Funkateers began chanting, 'Come back Bootsy, Come back, Come back, Bootsy Come Back'. Not only do I have bootz on the ground, we got troops getting down, drones in the air and these young disciples were hungry and not a one of them was scared. The vets of Hip-hop, a la cream of the crop, shouted out to retain their gold, made me feel real good once again to know that they still got soul."

Look out for our Bootsy interview in due course: we're especially looking forward to hearing how it felt to jam with Victor Wooten, Stanley Clarke and Manou Gallo on one of the new songs. Now *that's* a bass-off.

www.bootsycollins.com

BECK AND CALL

"When I'm in session mode, I'm there to serve you. I am a blank canvas that's there exclusively for you in that moment. My sole responsibility is to assimilate all the wishes in your musical mind. The moment a session guy forgets that goal is the moment they are losing it and probably not in the right place..." These are the words of Beck/Nine Inch Nails bassist Justin Meldal-Johnsen, interviewed a while back by *BGM* writer Amit Sharma and now available to read at Future Publishing's musicians' portal Musicradar, where indeed there is a ton of other cool content from this and other Future music magazines. Musicradar has recently been running a campaign called Bass Week, which we urge you to investigate without delay...

www.musicradar.com

WAVE FORMS

It's been a while since we reviewed a Willcox bass, a state of affairs which we want to rectify at speed because the company's Lightwave optical pickup technology has to be seen to be believed. Although they tell us that the pickups work by shooting lasers at the strings to sense how fast they're vibrating, we prefer to think of it as pure witchcraft. In any case, Willcox have just announced a US custom shop in California, where Stateside bassists can order a Lightwave-equipped bass with a choice of premium tonewoods and fingerboards.

www.willcoxguitars.com/customshop

SHOP TALK

A new feature in which we meet a renowned bass-maker.

This month: luthier Jens Schoenitz

Strolling around the stands at this year's London Bass Guitar Show, it was clear that the custom bass-building business is thriving. It also strikes me that many of these makers are German – I wonder why? This was my first question to luthier Jens Schoenitz, a tall, serious-looking guy who makes exquisite acoustic instruments from his small workshop just north of Nuremberg. "It's our heritage," he says. "The Mittenwald area of Bavaria has a rich tradition going back through centuries of making stringed instruments. Double basses in particular from this area have always been prized."

Jens started out in 1997, working for Gerald Marleaux. After this he studied guitar and violin-making for four years, before completing his masters. The basis of his diploma was developing a new design for an acoustic bass guitar. "As a bass player myself, I'd tried many acoustic basses, but they were always uncomfortable to play," he tells us. "The string tension was too high, the intonation was bad and they just felt like a compromise. So I decided to build a bass using the principles of classical guitar design that I'd studied at college. I started with some definite ideas of what I wanted to achieve. For example, I wanted the scale length and the neck profile to be the same as that of a standard electric bass, so that players swapping between the two would find them familiar to play." I can certainly vouch for this: they have a rich, warm and sonorous acoustic tone – but close your eyes and you could have a Precision neck under your fingers.

A striking feature of these basses is the angled cutaway. I asked Jens about this. "The problem with a normal cutaway on an acoustic bass is that it decreases the internal space. With this design, you still have easy access to the second octave, while the decrease in the volume of the body is kept to a minimum."

Although Schoenitz basses can be played unamplified, and sound as loud and deep as any acoustic bass I've ever played, many of us will need to amplify them, which can often mean feedback. Is this a problem, I ask? "I fit all my basses with passive K&K piezo pickups," he explains. "No batteries are needed – you can set the tone from your amp or outboard EQ. Of course, at high volume this can cause feedback, so to help solve this the basses come with a sculpted foam bung which fits exactly into the soundhole. This is topped with a veneer of the same wood as the front of the bass."

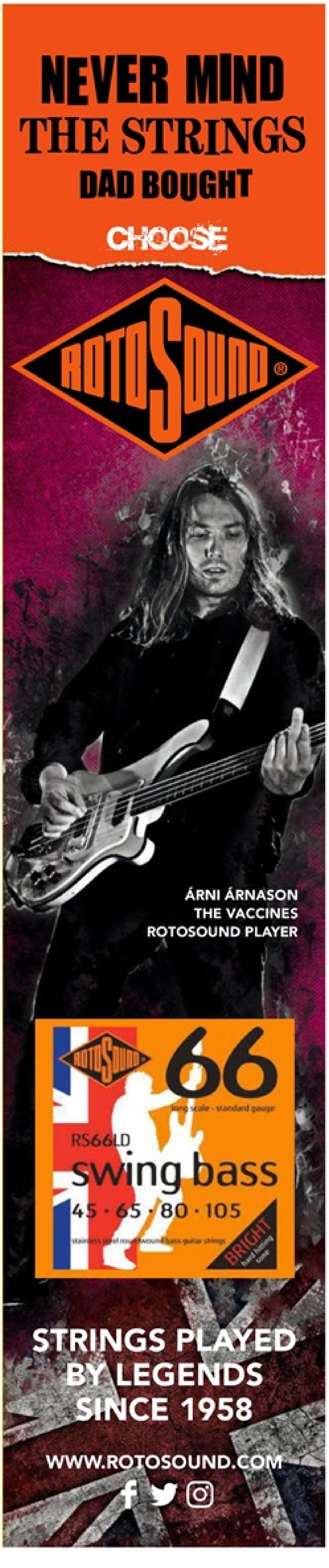
Another unusual feature of Jens' basses is their finish. "The necks are waxed, but for the body I use traditional French polish. This is much thinner than normal varnish and allows the instruments to vibrate and 'speak' more freely". He has stocks of tonewoods to meet any special requests from customers but prefers to use European timbers for his basses, particularly fruit tree woods like pear, cherry and plum. **Kev Sanders**

www.schonitz-gitarren.de

ODDEN NUMBERS

"Warwick have announced a new endorser, Anders Odden, bassist with experimental Norwegian metallers Satyricon. Odden plays a Warwick Custom Shop Masterbuilt Streamer LX with a long scale, a red alder body, maple neck and wenge fingerboard. Equipped with EMG pickups, the instrument also possesses – and this is highly appropriate – Black Metal hardware.

www.warwick.de, www.satyricon.no



Won

John Mountford and Rhia Drew take home an Eden Astroflange pedal. Many thanks to all who entered our competition.

PURE GOLD

"The double neck guitar is an instrument born of the progressive rock movement of the 1970s. Bands such as Genesis, Yes, Rush, Led Zeppelin, the Who, Kansas and the Mahavishnu Orchestra were renowned for prodigious musicianship, outlandish stage sets and costumes, and music of incredible complexity..." These are the words of Dr. David MacGregor, a renowned guitar/bass consultant at Chiswick Auctions in London, where a very rare – perhaps unique – twin-neck Shergold bass is set for auction on October 4.

Shergold, one of Britain's foremost custom guitar builders in the 1980s, were known for building basses for Mike Rutherford of Genesis, Peter Hook of New Order and Julian Cope of Teardrop Explodes. The original owner of this bass is unknown, so if any readers recognise it and have info about its provenance, do let us know.

"These were the types of instruments I used of dream of owning and used to read about in *Beat Instrumental* and *International Musician* magazine. As an avid Yes and Genesis fan in the 1970s, I would admire these rare custom-built guitars at concerts and on album sleeves," says Dr. MacGregor. Us too, chap!

https://chiswickauctions.co.uk

BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain

Blasius Bali 5 Fretless Custom £2,490

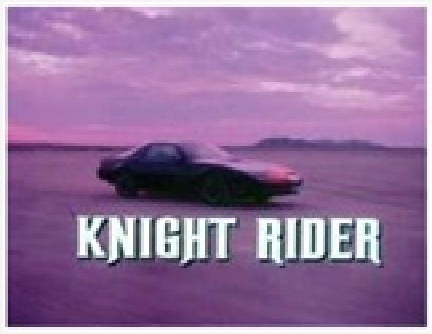
http://tinyurl.com/yalm53d5

Have mercy! Up this month is a real looker. This is the Blasius Bali 5 Fretless Custom, a Hungarian-built beauty comprising an ash body – including a carbon fibre soundplate under the neck pocket – and a highly figured walnut top. The neck is maple with carbon fibre laminates and the pickups are Bartolini P25CBC-Bs. The hardware is Blasius's own 3D bridge with Schaller tuners, and the volume doubles as an active/passive mode control. With Zolkow's three-band active EQ, this is a bass for players who prefer a more classic-sounding instrument, although the electronics supply the versatility to sound modern too. This is a classy bass from top to bottom. Get your GAS on!

REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: 'Knight Rider Theme' (1982)



Bassist: Chuck Berghofer (we think)

"Knight Rider. A shadowy flight into the dangerous world of a man who does not exist. Michael Knight: a young loner on a crusade to champion the cause of the innocent, the helpless, the powerless, in a world of criminals who operate above the law..." Yes, if you're aged between 30 and 50 you'll feel a shiver of nostalgia at the cheesy opening words to the cheesiest TV series ever filmed, redeemed massively by its beyond-amazing theme tune. Now, we *think* the legendary Wrecking Crew member and bassist Chuck Berghofer recorded the ace staccato bass part. Can anyone confirm?

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Pic by David J Lee

Krist Novoselic, once of cult "grunge" band Nirvana, returns with a new group called Giants In The Trees and a debut single, 'Sasquatch'. Singer Jillian Raye, guitarist Ray Prestegard and drummer Erik Friend accompany Novoselic, who last appeared in *BGM* back in 2011 and who is definitely overdue another feature. He also plays accordion in the band, and commented on the video for 'Sasquatch' with typical dry humour. "I bought the property the video is filmed on. To pay for the production I cut all the trees and am now building a golf course on the land. This video cost over $2 million to make. The reason is, it was shot on a soundstage and all of the flora is made from plastic, foam and other materials to get that natural look."

THE BILL

Ace rock bassists Rudy Sarzo and Billy Sheehan are the latest musicians to sign up with the Rock Against MS Foundation, a charity which raises awareness of and funds for the treatment of multiple sclerosis. The organisation also numbers Ozzy Osbourne, Marky Ramone and Billy Morrison among its ranks, with the celebs donating VIP concert tickets, gear and so on to the charity. Sarzo is offering a two-hour lesson and a signed bass; Sheehan will be auctioning off a bass lesson, a dinner and a Yamaha TRBX304 bass. We recommend that you go for the dinner at the very least – as we know from personal experience, a night out with the great man is always one to remember.

www.rockagainstms.org

THE MU

Take care of the paperwork before pressing record, warn the Musicians' Union

In the excitement of preparing to record for the first time, it can be easy to forget about one important factor: protecting your work. Whatever you're laying down, it is essential to safeguard the rights in the composition, recording, and performance, and to understand the difference between them.

Partnership and co-writing forms

It's a good idea to have contracts in place with everyone you're collaborating with. The Musicians' Union (MU) Partnership Agreement is a good place to start. "It's important to establish key issues: whether you're performing as a band; who has written the music; and who will get the publishing rights," says MU Assistant General Secretary Naomi Pohl. "If that's going to be a negotiation, you probably need a partnership agreement or a co-writing agreement."

The MU Song Share Agreement, which can be used on a song-by-song basis, sets out a percentage for each person who has worked on the composition and/or lyrical content of the song. For two people co-writing, a 50/50 split is fairly standard. Sometimes one person has done the majority of the writing – in which case, a different split might be more appropriate, whatever percentage you mutually decide. The key is to decide beforehand to avoid nasty situations later.

Collective agreements

The MU has simplified the realm of copyright law by drawing up collective recording agreements with production companies and bodies such as the BPI. Naomi explains: "If you're recording for commercial release, you should be using a BPI/ MU agreement. That covers the major and independent labels, but also works for an individual artist wanting to make a recording and hire session musicians." Promo video and TV backing track rights are also included in the BPI form. Once the music is recorded, register it with PPL and list all featured artists. You will also need to list the non-featured performers – session musicians, for example – who will get a smaller share of the PPL revenue.

Who's the owner?

Before even starting to record, it's essential to make it clear who owns the final recording. MU Sessions Official Pete Thoms says: "If you're paying for the session, you are effectively the rights owner and the record label. So if you're hiring other musicians, you should probably go straight for the BPI/MU session agreement. If you're not registered as a record label, just put your name on the top, and that gives you the right to release that commercially."

This can be a little tricky when you're using a friend's studio, which they might be willing to let you use for free. In this case, it is wise to pay a token amount. "I would be really cautious about this," says Naomi. "You should pay a fee, even if it's only nominal, to show that you are the person booking the studio and paying for that time. That makes it clear, legally, that you own the recording. Plus, it's more professional."

Another scenario to consider is when you bring a song idea to a studio, and the engineer/musician helps you record parts. Pete Thoms: "If you're expecting the engineer to flesh out your idea, you must have an agreement that makes it clear that the song is yours, and that whatever the studio or the engineer is contributing is simply an arrangement of your idea. Otherwise, you might end up in a situation where someone claims they helped you to write the song."

Ask the Union

Need help? Our specialist officials can help. For free basic advice, contact information to get tailored help and more on how to join the Musicians' Union, visit **theMU.org**.

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string

GEAR

BASSES Music Man Stingray, custom Modulus

EFFECTS Darkglass B7K Ultra preamp, Darkglass Super Symmetry compressor, custom noise gate made by Puff, Boss Tuner, Mooer ABY pedal, Klark DI Box

AMPS Peavey TNT 130 combo, Ampeg SVT 3 Pro Amp and 4x10 cabinetl

HUBERT WIECEK DECAPITATED

I'm a guitarist's dream bass player. My job in the band is to create powerful low frequencies to fulfil the band's sound. I make groovy bass-lines with the drums and a background for the riffs. I do not disturb the guitar, I don't show off, I make the bass work together with the rest of the band. While recording the newest Decapitated album *Anticult*, we were intent on composing the most suitable lines, groovy, catchy motives, and all of those landscape parts, trying to perfectly match with the drums and giving the low end to the guitar riffs, which in turn made the songs so powerful. I am officially endorsed by Ibanez as a guitarist. Recently I've also become endorsed by Darkglass Electronics. I'm also sponsored by Ernie Ball Strings. I play five-string because I need the lower notes, like G# or B, it depends on the tuning. I wouldn't play a six-string bass, because I very rarely use higher notes, and the thicker neck would be harder to play. There is no need and no space for slapping in Decapitated. Sometimes I slap the lower notes with my whole hand or hit the body with my fist. Before joining Decapitated I was originally a guitar player, so I feel that this gives me an additional feeling about how the guitar riffs should work together with the bass, and an awareness that they shouldn't disturb one another. It really helps with the bass, unless you have a savage desire to show off with all the solos on the bass. I truly believe that being a bass player in a metal band is all about taking one step back and focusing on merging the sound of the band. Perhaps you won't get much applause, but thanks to you the band sounds awesome. My first bass hero that I was aware of was Les Claypool. I first heard 'Jerry Was A Racecar Driver' while playing *Tony Hawk Pro Skateboarding* on a Playstation. Later on I saw Wojtek Pilichowski for the first time, who totally blew me away with all of his tricks. You know, over the years your heroes change. At the beginning, when you first discover music, your bass heroes would likely be Wilton Felder, James Jamerson or Louis Johnson. That was at least the case for me. Later on I discovered Sting, John Deacon, Roger Glover, Geezer Butler, Flea, Cliff Burton, Steve DiGiorgio and so on. If you think that you will succeed because you are a great musician and have excellent technical skills – you're wrong. I'd say that this is only 20 per cent, because these days everyone is good at playing. Just go on Youtube and watch those kids shredding. And so what? Can they do a two-month tour and travel hundreds of kilometres every day, sleeping crooked in a bus, and behave with respect to their bandmates? Would they persevere enough to play small gigs, lose all of their money, sacrifice all of their time, and listen to people that are bashing their ambitions and dreams for 15 years? I've missed Christmases with my family, missed out on all of my friends meetings up during the holidays. There were probably several better technically skilled bass players for the job, but so what? Your skills are 20 per cent, the rest is your attitude.

www.facebook.com/hubertwiecekmusic

GEAR

BASSES Fender Jazz, APC bass ukulele

EFFECTS EBS Unichorus, EBS Octabass, EBS Bass IQ, TC Electronic Spectracomp

AMPS Markbass

ANDREW JAMES REYNOLDS

I started playing five-string bass this summer: a lot of my dep gigs' repertoire require a lower tone, and there is no substitution for a B string. Bass chords sound bright too. Slap is a good technique to master if you want to be a well-rounded bassist: it can also open up some employment opportunities. It's all about practice, persistence, determination, patience, discipline, setting achievable goals, building a good knowledge of rhythmic subdivisions by practising with a metronome, understanding theory and harmony, chord tones, reading, transcribing everything and anything you can – and covering as many different styles and genres as possible. My bass heroes are Laurence Cottle, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender, Louis Johnson, Marcus Miller, Francis 'Rocco' Prestia, Paul Turner, Mark King, James Jamerson, Jaco Pastorius, Phillip Mann, Paul Geary, Phil Williams, Yolanda Charles, Dave Swift, Mike Brooks, Stuart Clayton, Joe Sam, Ellen O'Riley, Dave Marks, Andy Irvine, Nick Beggs. Pino Palladino, Scott Devine, Mark Smith, Nathan Phillips and Larry Graham. I'll be playing BBC Radio Solent with Harry Baker in October and summer festivals on main stages with different artists. You can't spell bass without ass, and that's what the crowd like to shake!

www.facebook.com/andrew.j.reynolds.1485

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GEAR

BASSES Fender Precision, Fender Musicmaster, Christian Laborie Etude, Lovaszi Stella, Fishman Full Circle and Ehrlund Pickups, DPA microphones, Pirastro/Gamut Gut and Hybrid strings
EFFECTS MXR chorus, Sansamp Programmable DI, Boss OC3, Electro-Harmonix MicroSynth
AMPS Ampeg SVT-VR, Ampeg 410 HLF cabinet, Genz Benz Shuttle 3, Mark Bass Little Mark III, Aguilar SL112

FERG IRELAND KANSAS SMITTY'S HOUSE BAND

I started playing double bass at eight years old. I had a tiny cello-sized thing, it was perfect at the time. My first bass guitar was a Fender Squier Precision that I played to death. The secret of playing bass well is playing with a good feel and pocket, in time and in tune – on double bass – with a good sound. Serve the music and make your band-members sound good. A 1962 Precision through a good vintage Ampeg is pretty unbeatable on the bass guitar front; for double bass, I prefer a nice old English or French one. Less is more, and don't worry about gear too much – if you know how to play and make stuff sound good you can play on anything. It should still sound like you. My main band Kansas Smitty's, in which I play double bass, is in the middle of a tour promoting our new album, out at the end of the summer. Our new single 'Movin' On' has just been released, so check that out on Spotify and catch us at Shoreditch Town Hall on November 18.

www.kansassmittys.com

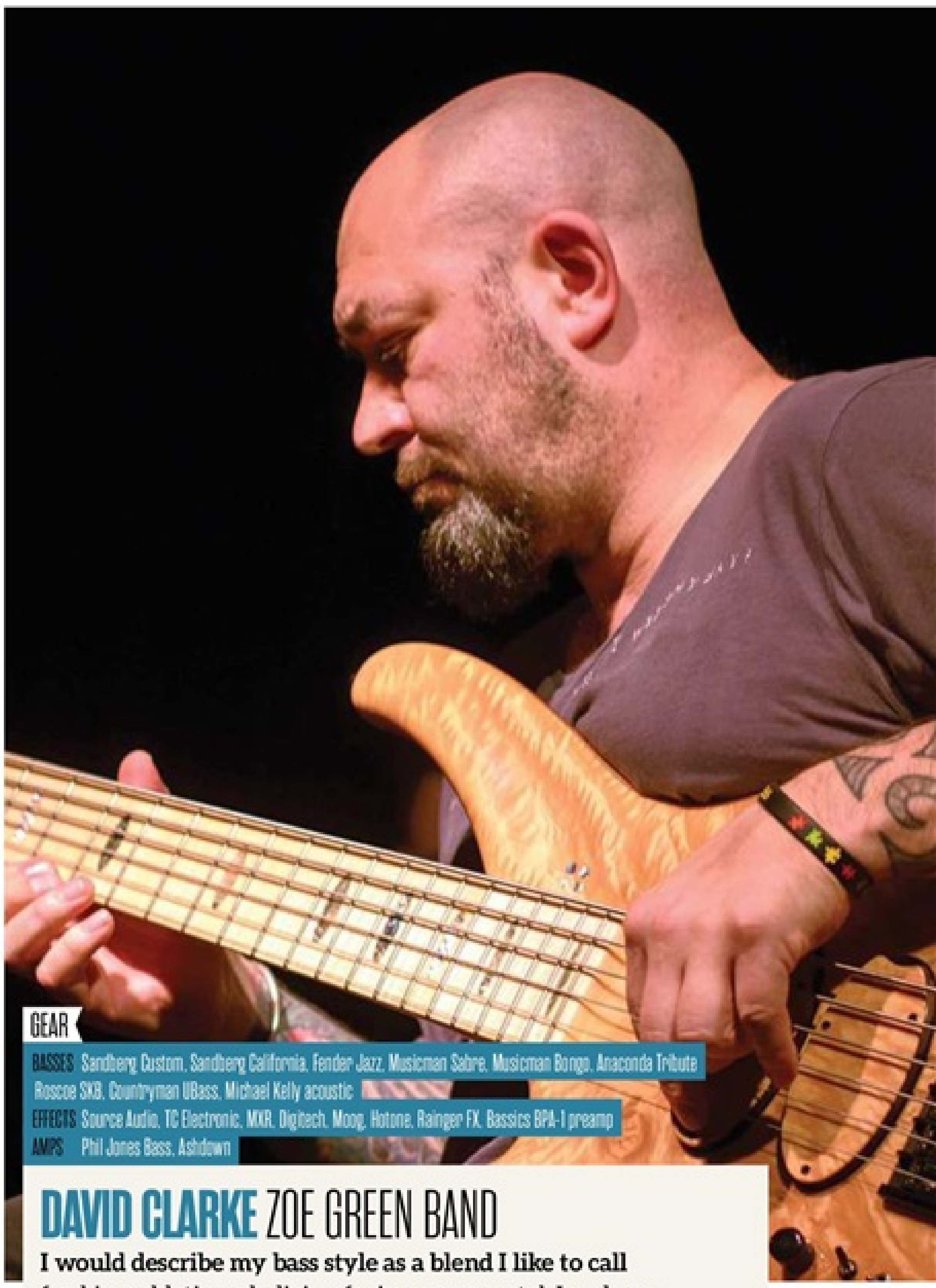
GEAR

BASSES Fender Jazz, Rickenbacker 4001
EFFECTS Boss OD-3, NS-2 and TU-3, EHX Micro Pog
AMPS Ashdown ABM 600, RM-610-T vabinet

BEN GRIFFITHS ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY

I would describe my bass style as that of a man who is essentially punching his bass to death with every passing gig. I'm very lucky to have been assisted by the wonderful folks at Ashdown for just over a year now. I do not play a five- or six-string bass, because despite having the hand-span of an ageing Premier League goalkeeper, I cannot handle a fat neck. I do not slap, because I've never needed to, and quite frankly, because I'm never going to better Mark King, so what's the point? The secret of playing bass well is to know when you don't need to play. My first bass was an Epiphone Thunderbird, and the less said about that, the better. My favourite bass ever to date is my current Fender Mexican Jazz. I've had House Of Tone pickups installed and it sounds like a giant walrus birthing a sabretooth tiger. The greatest bass player that ever lived is, was, and forever will be Paul McCartney.

www.facebook.com/alphamaleteaparty



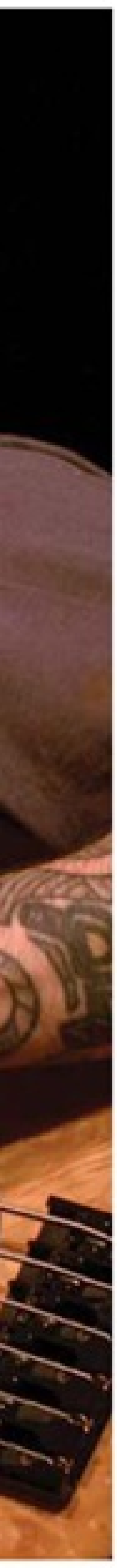
GEAR

BASSES Sandberg Custom, Sandberg California, Fender Jazz, Musicman Sabre, Musicman Bongo, Anaconda Tribute Roscoe SKB, Countryman UBass, Michael Kelly acoustic
EFFECTS Source Audio, TC Electronic, MXR, Digitech, Moog, Hotone, Rainger FX, Bassics BPA-1 preamp
AMPS Phil Jones Bass, Ashdown

DAVID CLARKE ZOE GREEN BAND

I would describe my bass style as a blend I like to call funkinrocklatinmelodicjazzfusionreggaemetal. I endorse Sandberg, Phil Jones Bass, Ashdown Engineering, Bassics, Dunlop strings and MXR. I love five- and six-string basses. Just having that extra range means more colours to paint with. Every style, especially slapping, has a place in the right context. It's not always restricted to funk. In metal I always loved Robert Trujillo's thumb playing in Suicidal Tendencies and Infectious Grooves, or the opposite extreme: Marcus Miller's use of the thumb in ballads with artists such as David Sanborn and Luther Vandross. The secret of playing bass well is a shedload of practising. Play what the music needs, however complex or sparse. Immerse yourself in all styles. My first bass was an Ibanez Musician – and I wish I still had it. My favourite bass ever to date is my Sandberg Custom Supreme six: a majestic thing of beauty. The greatest bass player that ever lived? I'm torn between Jaco Pastorius and James Jamerson. Both were incredible, innovative players who set bass guitar to a new level. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* by the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The sound of the Wal bass which Flea used on the majority of that album is killer. I'm currently touring with the Zoe Green Band and the Really Hot Chili Peppers, and doing a flow of gigs throughout the Midlands with the Rowberry/Clarke Project, my piano/six-string bass duo. I also teach bass at PMT Birmingham and Progress Music Academy. Learn music. We're musicians that chose to use a bass to project our creativity. Learn the fretboard and theory. You'll never lose your groove by doing this. If anything, it'll enhance what you do already by opening up more harmonic and melodic options and giving you more confidence in what you do.

www.dcbass.co.uk



GEAR

BASSES Sandberg Custom, Sandberg TM4, Ernie Ball strings
EFFECTS Sansamp RPM, Sansamp Bass Driver Deluxe, Darkglass B7K
AMPS Hartke LH1000, 2 x Hartke Hydrive 410

LEE CHURCHILL AUSTIN GOLD

I spent my early playing years trying to mimic Jason Newsted's right-hand picking for power and precision, and later focused on Chris Wolstenholme's fingerstyle technique. I tend to switch between playing with a pick and fingerstyle in the Austin Gold live set depending on what state my strings are in, the on-stage tone and volume or whichever way the mood takes me. I had a Sandberg bass endorsement back in the early 2000s. My endorsement bass back then was a custom shop instrument built to my spec. It's basically a five-string Jazz bass on steroids, similar to their current California TM range but with a different pickup configuration. It's like an extension of my right arm, I just can't find anything else that comes close. I also have a standard four-string California TM as backup, but this five has been been my number one for over 12 years and I can't see that changing any time soon. I've had an American Precision, a Jazz and a Musicman that I've had as a backup or alternatives to the Sandberg, but ended up flipping them after a few months as they just don't get played when the Sandberg's around. For me, the secrets of good bass playing are 1) Always know whether you're major, or minor 2) Always serve the song and leave the ego at home 3) Practise with a metronome as much as you can! You don't realise how important that is until you get to your first recording session 4) It's all about right hand technique, power and consistency. The greatest bass player that ever lived has to be James Jamerson. I didn't really discover him properly until a few years back. When I started doing my homework on him I was just blown away. The tone, the technique: it's all there. Try and expose yourself to as many genres of music and different players as you can early on in your playing career. I spent too long when I was starting out focusing on such a small genre of players and bands and looking back now, it probably restricted my development as a player. It wasn't until much later on in my playing career that I opened my mind to other styles and genres, and it really helped my technique and style develop. Our debut album, *Before Dark Clouds*, is out in October. We're really proud of this one. It was all recorded analogue in live takes and to tape, which was a first for me.

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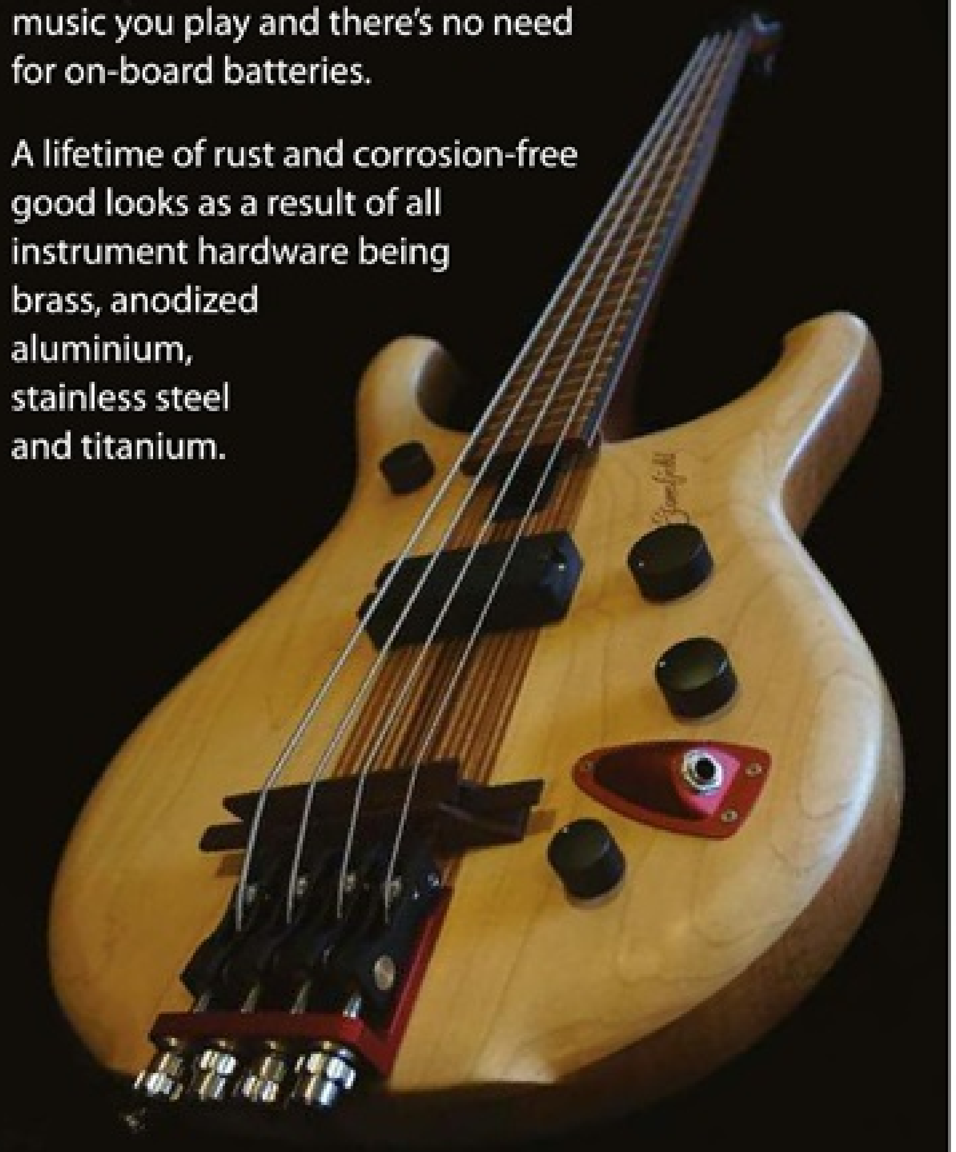

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PLAYERS SCHOOL

Our regular non-bassist's view of the bass guitar, courtesy of the Players School in Florida. This month: master luthier Mick Donner

Once a semester, I teach a masterclass in instrument repair and maintenance at the Players School Of Music. I'm really not that exceptional as a builder and repairman, but the thing that sets me apart from other repairmen where a lot of my customers are concerned is that we have a repairman-player relationship that dates back years. This means I know exactly what needs to be done to a bass guitar to make it feel and sound the way each player likes it. My repeat customers and I almost never talk about their basses when they come in for a simple setup, unless there is a specific problem they've noticed.

This is the type of player-repairman relationship that everyone should ultimately have. Some of my clients are friends but, first and foremost, I'm providing a service for them that they pay for, so my goal is always customer satisfaction. This is the key to good reviews and repeat customers. Most of the people I do repair and modifications for are working, professional musicians. Their instruments are the tools of their trade, the things they use to feed and house themselves and their families. There's no excuse for them to settle for second-rate work from me, whether we have something other than a business relationship or not.

The first step toward this type of player-repairman relationship is to realise that no two people approach the instrument in the same way, and no two instruments (no matter how alike) will play and sound the same. As a player, you need to be realistic about the capabilities of your instrument in relation to your particular style and, as a repairman; I need to make sure that you're aware of them.

For instance, someone playing in a punk band who hits the strings really hard with their right hand can't expect to have low action. The reason for this is that, in order for the instrument to produce sound, the string has to be set in motion. The motion of the string (its "orbit") is usually an oval-shaped path that the string takes after being struck. The harder you hit the string, the larger the orbit. The larger the orbit, the greater distance required between the string and fretboard to avoid fret buzz.

I've been really fortunate to have a career that allowed me to work with some of the greatest players on the planet. It's pretty well known that guys like Jeff Berlin and Brian Bromberg play with an extremely low action. That said, there are plenty of jazz players who like their action higher, either because they came to electric from upright and it's more comfortable and familiar to them, or because they're looking for a larger, clearer tone from the instrument. Oddly enough, the lowest action I've ever seen on a bass guitar was on the instrument of a rock icon who played louder than anyone else I've ever seen live. The reason he could have his action so low is that he was just barely touching the strings with his right hand, tapping them just hard enough to set them in motion.

With all this in mind I always advise my students to find a repairman who's interested in seeing you play and noting your approach to the instrument before setting it up. If he or she doesn't ask to see you play, they're not going to set it up for you. They're going to set it up for themselves.

"THE FIRST STEP TOWARD THIS TYPE OF PLAYER-REPAIRMAN RELATIONSHIP IS TO REALISE THAT NO TWO PEOPLE APPROACH THE INSTRUMENT IN THE SAME WAY, AND NO TWO INSTRUMENTS (NO MATTER HOW ALIKE) WILL PLAY AND SOUND THE SAME"

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GEAR OF THE MONTH

In which three renowned gear experts nominate their bass, amp and effects unit of the month. Whether new or old, cheap or pricey, simple or complex, this gear has earned its place in our affections through simply being brilliant...

BASS

It was obviously something of a no-brainer when Fender eventually decided to produce a Marcus Miller Signature model back in the mid-Nineties. Based around Marcus's own 1977 Jazz bass, it became one of the bestselling signature basses that Fender have ever produced. Faithfully reproduced, there is much to enjoy, with its resonant ash body, maple neck with pearl block markers and binding, bullet truss rod, micro-tilt adjustment, Badass II bridge, reverse machine heads and flexible two-band active EQ. Examples can vary in weight: this particular bass was made in Japan in the late Nineties and is reasonably light, but other examples can be heavier, so try before you buy if possible. As a passive instrument, it plays and sounds great, with all the usual single-coil slinkiness you would expect, but the active EQ opens the palette up to offer even more tonal possibilities. This instrument has been upgraded with a John East Marcus Retro circuit, offering volume, pickup pan, active bass and treble (stacked), mid EQ and mid sweep (stacked), passive tone control, active/passive switching, pickup mode switching and a treble boost for added glassiness via a push/pull option. Examples vary in price, as they originally came in natural, white and sunburst finishes. Feel the funk!

Mike Brooks

AMP

In 1992, the German company AER started producing well-designed and engineered amplifiers, primarily for acoustic musicians. Over the years they've been subtly tweaking their amp designs to make them more relevant for bass guitarists too, and if you regularly double on upright and electric, an AER amp should be very near the top of your Christmas list. There are three combos in their range, rather unimaginatively called Amp1, Amp2 and – my personal favourite – Amp3. They all share a similar power and preamp design, with different speaker configurations. The Amp3 has two heavy-duty 8" drivers and excels at reproducing those all-important mid frequencies with astonishing accuracy. Not that you'll be left wanting in the bass department either, and for the biggest venues you can always add one of the company's active subs. The versatile preamp includes a top-notch compressor and an EQ. An AER Amp3 represents quite an investment, but once you have one it'll serve you for many years. That, combined with the combo's impeccable build quality, sound and modular design, makes it a great buy.

Kev Sanders

FX UNIT

Delay is an under-explored part of the bass player's pedal arsenal, despite a number of notable bassists making it part of their signature sound. From Pink Floyd's duelling, delay-soaked basses on 'One Of These Days' to Julie Slick's insanely complex layers of pitch-shifted echo sounds, via Doug Wimbish, Bootsy and Justin Chancellor from Tool, delay and bass can be a match made in heaven. The pedal options are pretty broad, from super simple to NASA-level complex, so let's have a look at what those deep space explorers at Eventide have come up with in the TimeFactor. This really is the 'everything but the kitchen sink' of delay pedals – 10 knobs, three buttons, expression pedal control, 100 presets... Just imagine how varied the possibilities of a delay pedal need to be to warrant 100 presets! It has tap tempo to stay in time, or MIDI sync for the studio or live tracks, and every conceivable type of delay, from ping pong to tape delay emulation. If that's not enough, there's a looper in there too, and even the looper has varispeed and the option to adjust the loop length. It's not cheap, and may well be overkill for your pop-rock covers band, but if you want a delay pedal that'll outstrip your imagination and make all your bass-delay ideas possible, the TimeFactor is a sure contender.

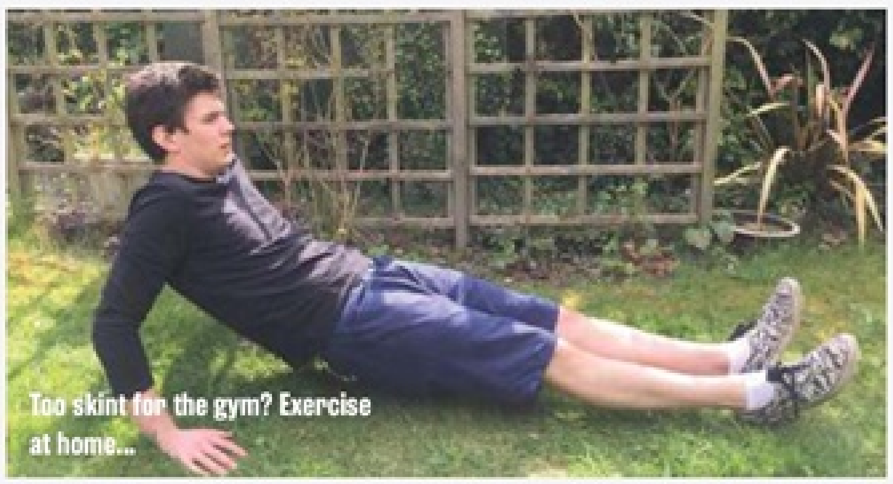
Steve Lawson

POWER BASS

NHS physiotherapist, martial artist and bassist Ben Whybrow gets you into shape for injury-free bass playing. Part two: get off the sofa!

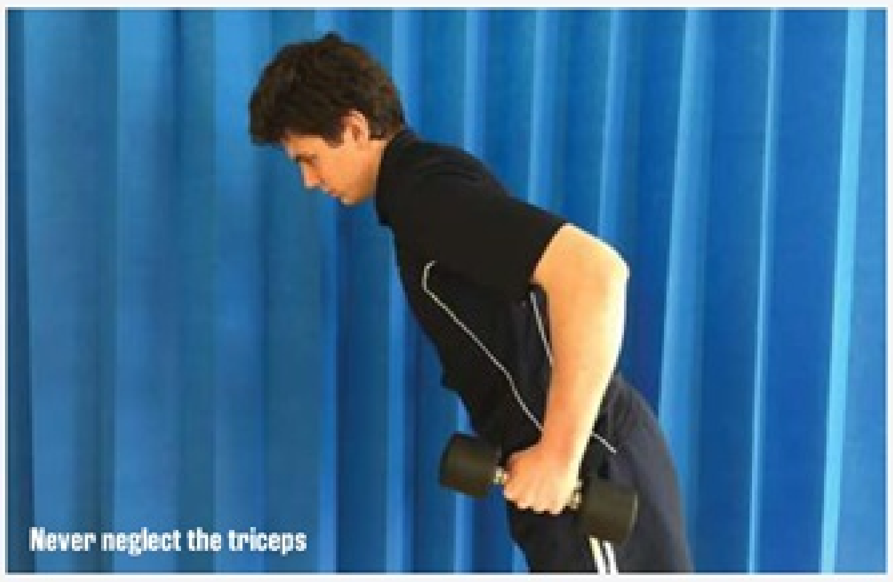
Exercise! With a single word, I can make many musicians cringe and want to cry inside, and I'm sure several readers have already skipped over to the next page in fear. If you're still here, well done! This is something that benefits us all, and when it's done correctly exercise should be fun, not a chore. When it comes to injury prevention, there is a plethora of evidence showing that people that exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing aches and pains: in bass world, where we're required to do a lot of heavy lifting, this can only be a good thing.

Before we get to bassist specifics, I want to be clear that there is no "bad" exercise. Providing we ignore the crazy Youtube sports like fireball soccer and train surfing (no, I'm not making these up!), most general mainstream exercise is beneficial for long-term health. If you get to the point where your heart rate is increasing, you're breathing more heavily and sweating, then you're on the right track. Of course, certain contact sports come with an inherent risk of acute injuries, but providing the sport is carried out in a safe and friendly environment there should no major concerns. I welcome anyone to come and try the Judo club and MMA gym where I work.


Too skint for the gym? Exercise at home...

The side plank: build that core strength!

A stronger picking arm will lead to fewer performance injuries


Never neglect the triceps

Are certain exercise types better for injury prevention?
Yes. Resistance exercise to build muscle strength has been found to be the most effective at reducing injury risk. The theory behind this is that it increases your tissues' capacity to tolerate higher load demands and therefore they are less likely to break down when increasing stress is applied. Cardiovascular exercise such as running, swimming and cycling are beneficial for tissue health, but compared to strength or resistance training, they have a much lower effect on reducing injury risk. Stretching – something we are all brought up to do – has repeatedly been found to have minimal or no effect on reducing injury risk, as it does not increase tissue capacity.

For bassists, this means getting the upper body strong, as this is where most of our aches and pains occur. This doesn't just mean doing bicep curls until the cows come home. Wrists, elbows, shoulders and the trunk should all be worked to build their tissue capacity. There are many effective upper body strengthening exercises, including shoulder presses, bent-over rows and standing shoulder external rotation.

What if I have no equipment or money for a gym membership?
No worries. Calisthenic (body weight) exercise is effective at building muscle strength and endurance, requiring no specific equipment, and it can be done anywhere. Examples include press ups, tricep dips and side plank.

What if I can't be bothered?
I can't force anyone to exercise. All I'll say is that people who exercise regularly, compared to those who don't, generally have lower incidences of cancer, stroke, heart attacks and dementia, as well as everyday pain. All I can do is give you the information – you'll need to make the decision about whether to enjoy a longer and healthier playing career. Come on: your audience needs you on your peak form!

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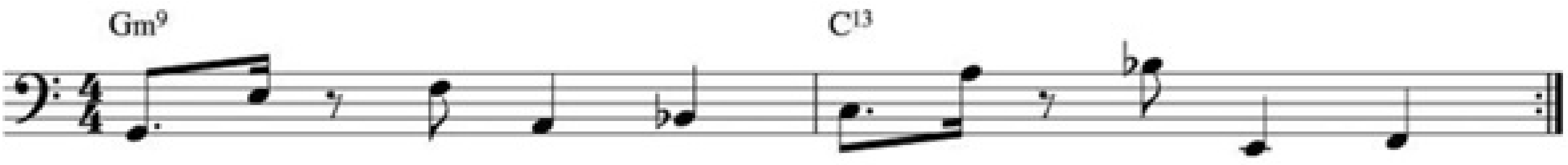
APPLIED IMPROVISATION WITH ROCKSCHOOL

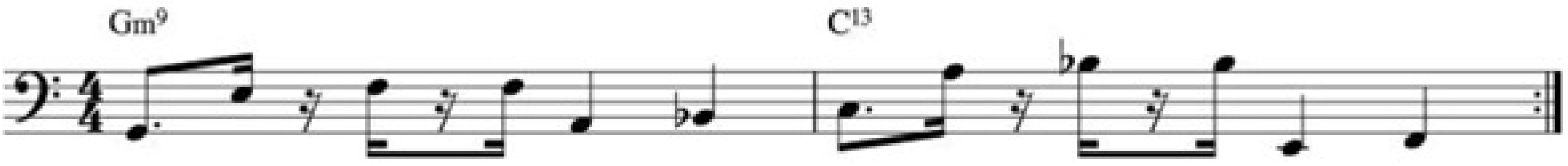
Building finger funk grooves with the great Joe Hubbard

EXAMPLE 1

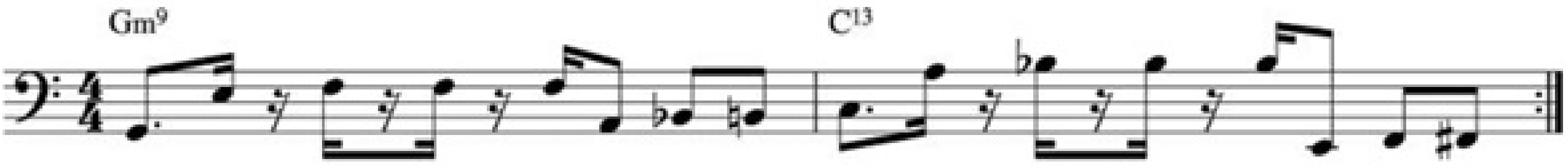
EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



> "THIS RHYTHMIC PATTERN APPEARS SO FREQUENTLY THAT IT IS WORTHY OF ANALYSIS"

Funk music was the jazz of commercial soul music in the 1970s, and utilised syncopated rhythm as a vehicle for that expression. This continues to be a source of inspiration for current modern music styles, such as rap, dance and jazz fusion. Miles Davis' 1970 album *Bitches Brew* is often cited as the very first jazz fusion record – Miles gives credit to James Brown as the source of inspiration for his music at that time.

One of the main interpretational differences between funk and jazz is that funk rhythms are played with a staccato feel, whereas jazz rhythms are played with a tenuto (notes held for full duration) feel. Both styles have a similar intensity, along with its related rhythmic concepts, so try listening critically to some funk music to understand how it feels.

A common approach, prolific in the world of funk, is a more start/stop rhythmic pattern made up of a dotted 8th note followed by a 16th note, then an 8th note rest followed by an 8th note. This rhythmic pattern appears so frequently that it is worthy of analysis.

Example 1
Notice in Example 1 how this creates a pattern that accents every third 16th note across two beats of 16th notes. This groove provides an anticipated feel, because it changes the placement of the backbeat, which is normally on beat two, to the last 16th note of beat one. Notice where the accents are placed in the measure to signify the new backbeat feel.

Example 2
This exercise demonstrates how adding quarter notes on beats 3 and 4 helps to make this anticipated groove sit back a bit and create more of a deep pocket.

Example 3
Here I'm adding extra notes on the second and fourth 16th notes of beat two, giving this groove a little more forward motion. This tends to add a little snap to the groove, allowing it to build more dynamically.

Example 4
Here we continue to build this groove: it is now much busier and more fluid. Many bass guitar players tend to start with a busy line and then end up having nowhere to go. The takeaway here is learning to understand how to strip back an original idea, building each section of the tune dynamically and musically. This is where you must start thinking like a composer, rather than just leaving everything to chance!

After going through Examples 1 to 4, replay Example 4 and work your way backwards through the process, as a deconstruction methodology. Pay close attention to what you are subtracting in each of the exercises.

This is a good concept to practise, because it helps you to strip away the unnecessary and find the golden essentials that you need...

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NO TREBLE

Kevin Johnson hails the genius of Vulfpeck's Joe Dart

No Treble readers have been digging into Vulfpeck ever since we posted their first video for 'Beastly' back in 2011. This hip, eclectic band from Michigan taps into elements of funk and classic soul for a style that's rooted in tradition while pushing those very musical boundaries. Part of the band's allure, especially for us low-enders, comes from the deep grooves of bassist Joe Dart, whose playing evokes shades of James Jamerson, Pino Palladino and Flea.

Dart has eluded the spotlight by not taking many interviews, even though Vulfpeck has soared to great fame. That's why one of the biggest stories on No Treble this month was our exclusive interview with the man himself. Mitch Joel chatted with Dart for our Groove podcast, and it was an insightful conversation, covering the band's origin as a studio project and their non-traditional path to success. He also gave us the scoop on how he grew as a bass player, including a cool story about how one of his biggest influences led him to explore other greats of the bass.

"When I was a kid playing bass, I was really inspired by Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers," Dart told Joel. "At one point my parents said I should get in touch with him, so I wrote him a letter at his music school in LA, the Silverlake Conservatory. I was probably 12 or 13 when I hand-wrote him that letter. I even recorded a tape of myself playing and asked him for advice. He sent me a handwritten letter back. He said, 'Hey Joe, your playing sounds great. Always remember the bass is a supportive instrument. You're there to support the song and the other players unless you're supposed to take the lead. Listen to 'What's Going On' by Marvin Gaye. James Jamerson is the greatest, so if you can study him you'll be okay.'"

As for how he sees his own bass playing, it's less about the aerobatics and more about the feel. "I think more like a drummer in a lot of ways. The most important thing to me as a bass player is time and groove and funk. That's it. It's crazy, because a few of these Vulfpeck videos have taken off because of these pretty chop-oriented songs like 'Beastly' or 'Dean Town'. For all the stamina and all the solos the band throws my way, I'm still at the end of the day just trying to make it feel good. It's all about where I'm putting the time and the groove. Luckily, there's two great drummers in the band, so we just lock in. I think that's a huge part of why people really dig our music."

By exploring the legacy of the instrument and remaining a servant of the song, Joe Dart has set an example of a bass player with taste and humility. It's no wonder we bass players love him: he's one of us. Check in next month for the buzz from No Treble!

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

Silvia Bluejay steps away from bass talk for a moment

There is one subforum on Basschat which isn't visible to non-members unless they sign up, or to lurking members unless they log in. It's called Off Topic, and it allows Basschatters to talk to, argue with, and support each other on non-music-related stuff. Its bewildering range of thread titles covers everything from the downright silly to the pretty damn serious. Some threads are the online equivalent of office chat by the water cooler: debates on sports, sneers about trash TV, humorous banter and jokes. Other topics are more heavy-duty, for instance those about certain current news items.

The admin team politely asks posters to refrain from talking politics, religion or sexism; however, heated rows on those subjects – especially the former two – have a habit of appearing in Off Topic almost as often as those about the best lightweight cabs do elsewhere on the site, and can be just as divisive. Moderators deal with Basschatters' seemingly unstoppable urge to talk politics by creating designated threads on special occasions, for instance when a general election is looming. But we always choose to nip in the bud any debate about faith and religion, and any sexist remarks.

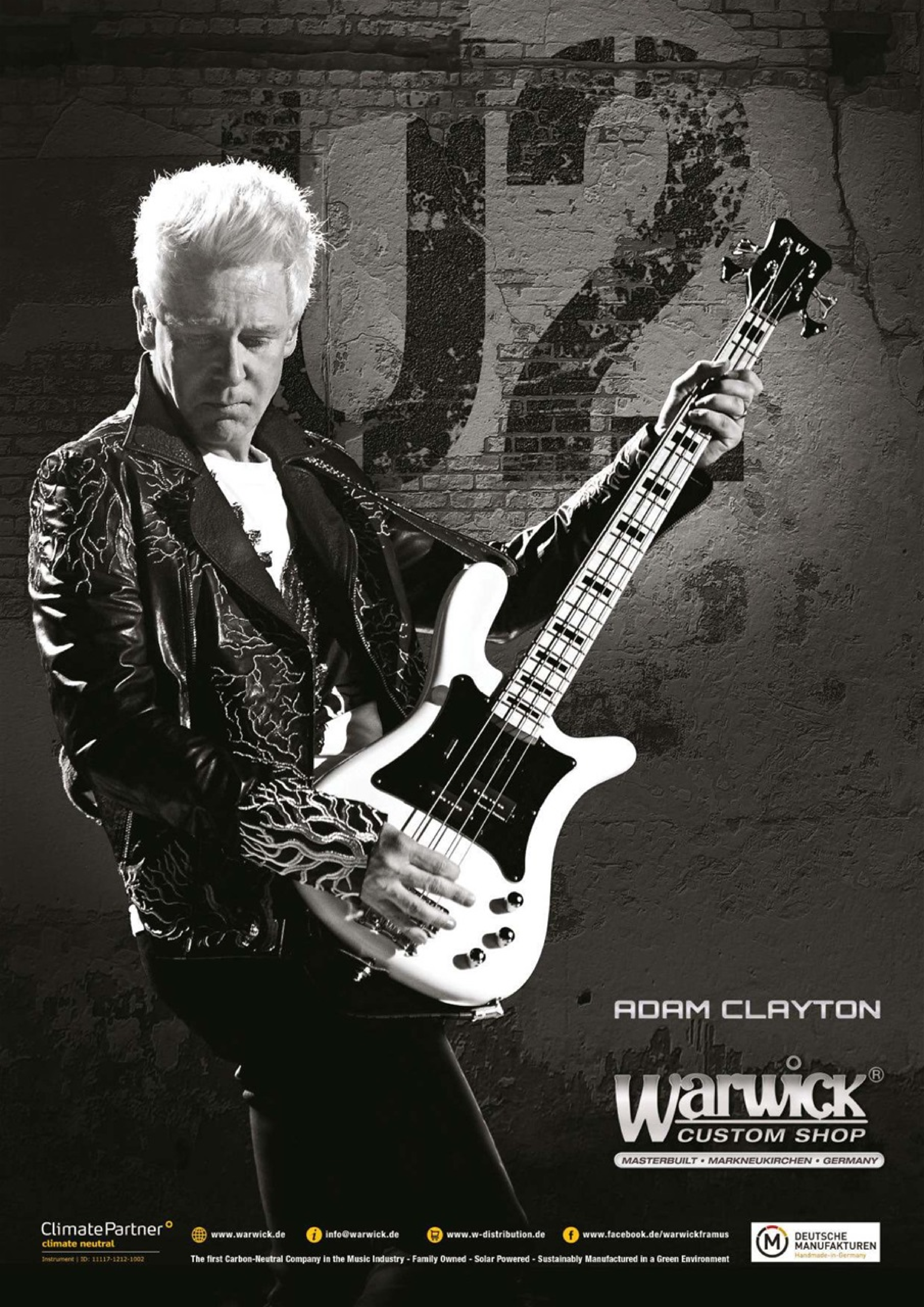
Despite the bickering, rowing and shouting, many of us who post in Off Topic trust our community enough to open up and ask for advice about personal issues. After all, certain discussions can be less painful when carried out from behind the relative anonymity of our online monikers than face to face in real life. We have had threads on Basschatters' health issues such as losing weight, quitting smoking, battling cancer, alcoholism, drug use and depression. We have helped each other through divorce and bereavement. As a community (give or take the obligatory few trolls, who are usually swiftly dealt with), we are good at rallying together and supporting those among us who seek help, even when it means forgetting for a moment that their preferred make of bass guitar or amplification is, frankly, rubbish.

It's fair to say that Off Topic has Marmite-like qualities in the eyes of Basschat as a whole; while roughly half of the membership – including some harassed moderators – wish it didn't exist, mostly seeing it as a hotbed of conflict, the other half frequents it in marked preference to the rest of the site. Some posters are virtually unknown, even just by name, to those who avoid Off Topic, but are like close friends to its other regulars.

Does such a subforum make sense on a music website? The jury is still out. Undeniably, it allows us to get to know individual posters as more rounded people, through hearing about their backgrounds, as opposed to seeing them just as fellow bass players. And if its threads help someone overcome life-threatening issues, they deserve to exist.

Off Topic is not all about conflict and coping with adversities, though. There's a fair amount of genuine humour and laughter. It's worth becoming a Basschat member just to see the Famous Quotes Thread, running since the very beginning of the site back in 2007. That's where we add witticisms and meaningful statements we read in other Basschatters' posts and deem worth preserving for future generations of low-enders. Sign up, have a read – but not if you're at work, or you'll get some funny looks from your colleagues when you crack up and laugh in front of your screen!

www.basschat.co.uk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Power Play

Soul legends Tower Of Power are about to hit the UK. Legendary bassist Francis 'Rocco' Prestia, the owner of the funkiest string-plucking hand on the planet, gives Joel McIver fair warning

Tower Of Power are one of the coolest bands ever formed, not just because their bass player Francis 'Rocco' Prestia is a man whose technique is slicker than an eel in Vaseline, but because their soulful, groovy blend of funk and old-school R&B has been on heavy rotation for most thinking music lovers for almost 50 (yep – count 'em) years.

If you're lucky, you'll see them play in the UK in the next few weeks: we urge you not to miss out. Although he's 66 years old and has survived a brush or two with the surgeon's knife over the years, Prestia always puts on a killer performance, playing each song as if it's the first time it's ever been performed. His bass style, the band's secret weapon, has to be seen and heard to be believed, based on super-dexterous picking, heavy muting and fills that defy explanation – all delivered with supreme accuracy. TOP's best-known song, 'What Is Hip?', also happens to be a perfect showcase for his playing: check it out before reading on, if you don't have it running through your head already.

When we spoke to him in the run-up to the UK dates, Prestia ("You can call me Francis or Rocco, whatever you prefer!" he chuckles) is on fine form. Quiet and unassuming in person, as opposed to the funk force he becomes on stage, the man is an example of how to be both super-talented and super-likeable.

Are you looking forward to the UK tour this autumn, Rocco?
Oh yes. These dates have been a long time coming. It's just a three-week tour, we try to keep them that length because it helps us to keep our sanity. I still enjoy playing live, but I don't enjoy the travel so much. The bottom line is getting enough rest. It makes it all much easier.

How do you go about keeping your bass chops up these days?
Being on the road is what keeps your chops up! I try to keep everything fresh and play with enthusiasm. I want to play it right, so I go after it with that in mind. I want to hit everything correctly.

What gear will you be bringing over?
I'm using TC Electronic amps and ESP four-string basses. I'm real happy with them. No pedals – I never went down that road.

Tell us about the ESP bass you play.
It's their LTD model and is very light, with an ebony fingerboard. I really appreciate that. It feels really good in my hands, which is all that matters to me, and I can get the tone that I'm looking for.

You've played with various basses over the years.
I played Fender, then I played Fernandes for a bunch of years, and then I went to Conklin and now I'm with ESP. Certain things happen business-wise, and it gets to a point where I had to move on. It's not because I hated the company, or because I hated the basses, or anything – it's just that things evolve to a point where something didn't happen the way it was supposed to, and I had to move on.

How did you get into bass?
I joined Tower Of Power in 1965, when I was 14 years old. Before that I played guitar, although I was one of those guitarists whose mother would say 'It's time to practise!' rather than picking it up myself: I really wasn't much of a guitar player. When I joined the band, a guy named Terry Saunders would come in and teach the band new songs every week. He was a jazz guy from the Bay Area. He assessed everybody, and when he came to me, he said 'You play bass'. I looked at him and said, 'What's a bass?' – but that's how it happened. I took to bass really naturally.

> "Being on the road is what keeps your chops up. I try to keep everything fresh and play with enthusiasm"

“I learned as I went along: we all did”

Do you remember what your first bass was like?
That's a good question... We went out and rented a bass: I thought it was a Fender, but they tell me it was something else. It doesn't matter. It looked like a Fender. The first bass I actually bought was a Vox.

How did you build your playing style?
I learned as I went along: we all did. Terry would teach us songs by the Rolling Stones and Paul Revere & The Raiders and the Animals, and all that kind of stuff from back in '65. Once we got hip to soul music, which was a couple of years later, everything changed and we started adding horns. At that time, Emilio [Castillo, vocals/saxophone], who was the leader of the band, took charge of learning the songs and teaching them to the rest of us. It progressed from there.

Which bassists influenced you back then?
I was listening to a lot of Motown, a lot of Memphis. At that time, different cities were associated with different sounds. Philly soul, Stax, Muscle Shoals – you know what I mean? I was listening to all that, but I didn't really know who the players were until much later. I learned about James Jamerson, Willie Weeks, Chuck Rainey and Duck Dunn after that.

You soon evolved the super-fast, muted, staccato style for which you're famous. Was anyone else playing bass that way at the time?
I don't know. Ha ha! Jamerson certainly bumped around, which is what I do as well. I play with a lot of muting and ghost notes, which is probably what made me a little different. I've talked to many bass players who have their own ways of muting. Those ways are foreign to me, because I mute with my left hand, but there are other ways of doing it.

Where did the idea of such tight fretting-hand muting come from?
It just evolved. It wasn't something I thought about. When [drummer] David Garibaldi joined the band in 1970, I had that Motown and Memphis feel, while he had all these incredible ideas and he was very busy. He plays a lot of ghosting as well. The two styles, when they mixed, just clicked.

Do you use three picking fingers or only the two?
Just two. That three-finger thing is very foreign to me, ha ha! I don't get it, but if you can do it, God bless you.

On your *Fingerstyle Funk* instructional video from 1993, you talk about being a busy bass player while not stepping on other musicians' toes.
That's just natural for me, because I'm always playing with horns and a lot of vocals. You always have to be aware of that.

Is 'What Is Hip?' your best-known bass part?
Yes, people seem to associate me with that song. That was Garibaldi's concept. He said he had this idea of the bass player droning on just one note, and everybody looked at him, like 'What? That ain't funky, what are you talking about?' – but we did it, and that's what came out.

Do you play the songs live the same way that you recorded them?
Everything I've ever recorded, from 'Still A Young Man' to 'What Is Hip?' – all those tunes evolve over time. Obviously the body of the tune stays the same in those songs, because it's such a significant part, but we're constantly remapping this or that. So no, I don't play them exactly the same.

Are you proud of those bass parts?
I never really looked at it that way. I go back and listen, and I think 'What the hell was I doing?' Ha ha!

How are your fingers holding up after all these years?
Well, that's always the question, isn't it? Ha ha! You play till you can't. But you know, they're pretty good. I sometimes battle with cramps, but for the most part I can't complain. I'm getting through the gig.

What's your solution for the cramps?
Everybody thinks it's about potassium, but for me, I take magnesium. Also, I was talking to the bassist with the Average White Band, and he told me about this stuff that he takes, because he was having problems with cramps, and it works real good. I also recently started warming up my hands and stretching before the show, and that really helps too. I rotate my arms, just to get the blood down into my fingers, and that's about it.

Have you always been a full-time musician?
Yes, it's pretty amazing when I think about it. Forty-nine years – they've gone by so quickly! We're fortunate enough to have a real strong fanbase, and they keep us going.

What have been the high points of your career?
Being appreciated by the bass community makes me proud: that's a nice thing. I never really thought too much about it until we'd done a few albums, and one day I was talking to somebody and he said 'What you guys are doing is pretty special'. I thought about it and realised that yes, what we do *is* kinda special.

What's next for Tower Of Power?
We have a new album coming out in 2018, a double. It's our first album in quite a while. It's way overdue! I also really enjoyed recording my solo album, *Everybody On The Bus!* [1999]: I'd like to do another one sometime.

David Garibaldi was injured in an accident earlier this year. Is he doing okay?
Yes, he's coming back this autumn. He and I definitely have a musical connection: we don't have to talk too much to know when to accent a part, or move something around. It clicks pretty naturally: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Do you have any advice for *BGM*'s readers?
Oh... there are a lot of things. Try to keep yourself on an even keel when it comes to drugs and alcohol, which can get in the way. Keep your faith strong, whatever your faith may be. Stay dedicated and stay on track. One thing to keep in mind is the way you communicate with your fellow musicians. It's really important to treat them with respect, even if you're a quote-unquote superior player. Playing in an ensemble is what makes you great, as opposed to just good, because everybody's got their part to play.

And how do you stay inspired?
Inspiration comes and goes. Sometimes you have to force it a little bit – but if you attack everything like it's the first time you ever played it, it'll stay fresh and will lead to new ideas.

Tower Of Power play Manchester Academy 2, Bristol O2 Academy Coventry Empire and the London Roundhouse from 12 to 15 October. Tickets: www.eventim.co.uk/Tower-of-Power. Info: www.towerofpower.com.

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13994 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless Bass
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

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16343 - Cort Action 4 PJ Bass Guitar, Walnut
14315 - Cort Action 4 String Bass, Black
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
10111 - Cort GB74 4 String Bass in Natural
16396 - Cort GB74JJ AB Aqua Blue
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass

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14643 - Fender Am Dlx Dimension Bass IV Cayenne
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15951 - Fender American Pro P Bass Olympic White
15354 - Fender American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass, 3-Col
15529 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass IV, ACBurst
15533 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink
15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
16127 - Fender Precision Partscaster, Secondhand
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
16296 - Fender Special Ed. Noir Precision Bass
16263 - Fender Standard P Bass, Brown Sunburst
15266 - G & L Tribute Series M2000, Sunburst
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst

Gibson

9207 - Gibson SG Bass Guitar Worn Ebony Faded
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst

MUSIC MAN

16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
16149 - MusicMan Stingray 4 Bass with 3 EQ Black
15941 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Heritage TobBurst

ORANGE

15107 - Orange O Bass, Off-Black

Spector

11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
16270 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Natural Stain
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
16175 - Squier Bronco Bass, Black
16151 - Squier Bronco Bass, Torino Red
15675 - Squier Vint Mod Jazz Bass 70s, CAR
16144 - Squier Jazz Bass Pack Black & Fender Amp
15890 - Tokai Jazz Sound Bass, Secondhand
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
15998 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, OVSunburst
15997 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Electric Bass
15996 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, Black
13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
15999 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans White

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15983 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass V, Black
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
15725 - Cort Action DLX 5 FGB Faded Grey Burst
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.

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16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
16180 - Ibanez BTB5 Trans Black, Secondhand
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
16288 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
16120 - Shuker Horn Bass, Trans Turqoise, Used
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
15797 - Squier Deluxe Dimension Bass V, Sunburst
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass, Black, Used
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

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10297 - Breedlove Solo BJ350/CMe4 Fretted
15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
15771 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Mahog
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic Blk
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway

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4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double, Black
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13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
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Ashdown Engineering

15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
15953 - Ashdown ABM410 Bass Combo, S-hand
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp with BlueT
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp

EDEN

12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13704 - Eden EM275 Stereo Bass Amp Combo
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

Hartke

14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

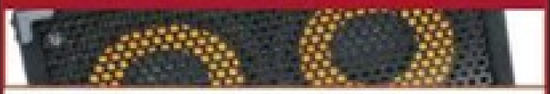
Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
16340 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head Used
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
16339 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head, Used
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
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15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10" Cab
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cab
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cab
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10" Cab
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD SuperK1 Alain Caron
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

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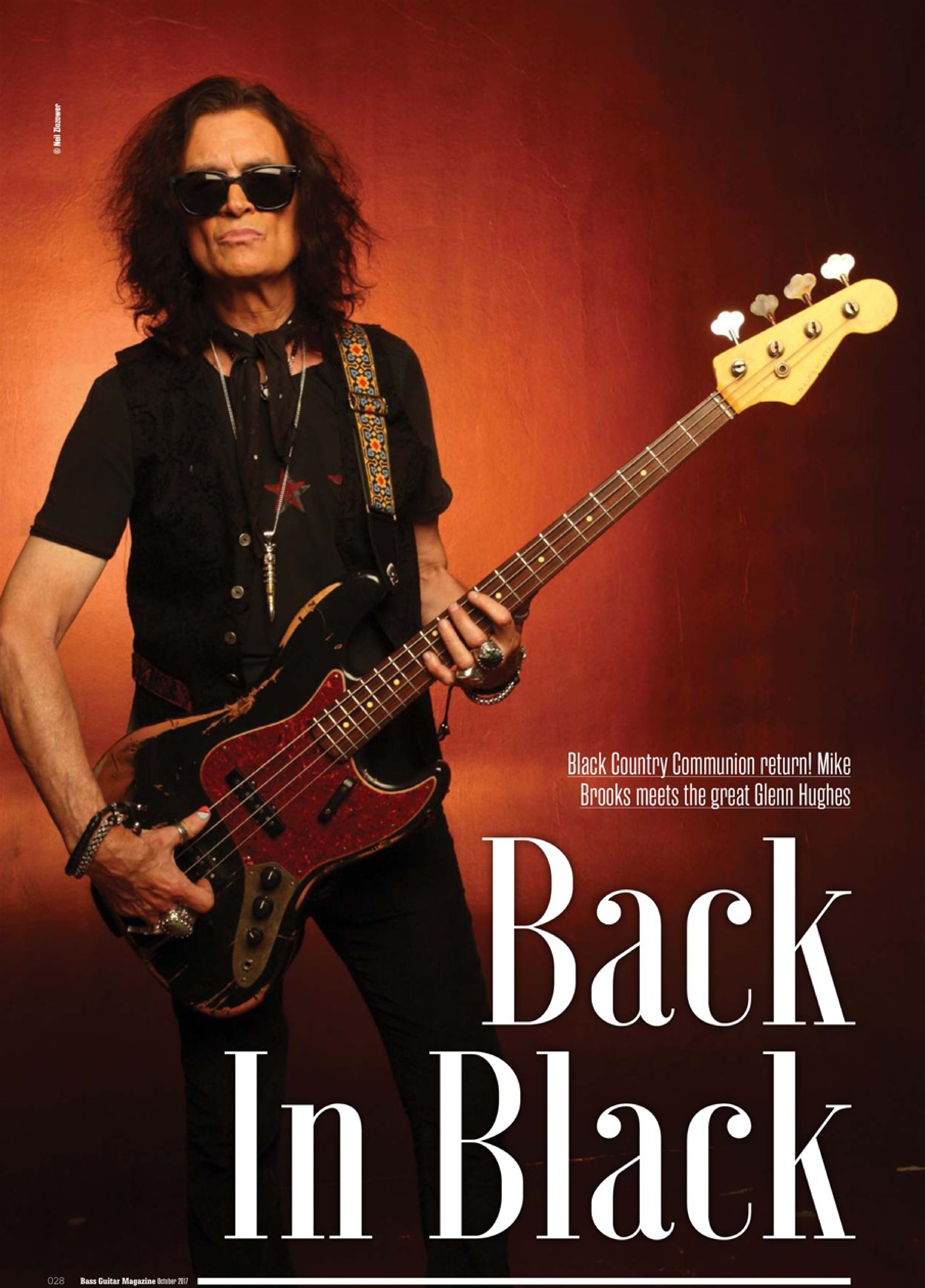

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Black Country Communion return! Mike Brooks meets the great Glenn Hughes

Back In Black

With a critically acclaimed solo album and highly successful tour in the bag in the last 12 months, you might think that Glenn Hughes would be entitled to a rest and a recharge of the creative batteries. But the bass overlord is having none of it: in between the release of *Resonate* last autumn and his European shows, Glenn undertook writing sessions with Joe Bonamassa, the results of which can now be heard on the reformed Black Country Communion's comeback album, *BCC IV*, the follow up to 2011's *Afterglow*.

"People know I'm a singer – but on this record, they will really know that I'm a bass player," Glenn announces. "I play out of the box now. I'm a groove man, I'm a James Jamerson freak, an Andy Fraser devotee, although Andy was younger than me. He didn't know this, but I opened for him when I was 16: we became as close as you could get about three years before he died."

The return of Black Country Communion after five years of silence is both welcome and long overdue. The fallout within the band following the release of *Afterglow* was down to a lack of live promotion to back up the album's release, we learn – and the situation was blown out of all proportion, as Glenn explains. "When the band disintegrated after *Afterglow*, the press had a field day with 'Glenn versus Joe'. I just want to make it clear, I wasn't angry, I was just disappointed and hurt that our beautiful band only did one show and that we didn't get to tour the album. There was some silence, the communication stopped between Joe and I for about four or five months, but we knew we needed some time and distance."

He adds: "In 2013, Kevin Shirley, our producer, said 'Can we do BCC in 2014?', and I said 'I don't think we can'. In 2015 he asked me again, but the timing still wasn't right. Joe was on a tour bus, though, and he decided to listen to every BCC track from start to finish. When he put his headphones down, he wanted to call me, apologise to me and to make amends. He knew that we're so damned good that we had to work again and rekindle our friendship."

Such is the way with supergroups, and of course, in today's world, it isn't uncommon for band members to have multiple ongoing projects. Add 'plate spinner' to both Glenn and Joe's list of credits. "BCC is the most glorified side project in history," says our man. "If we were a touring band and we did two albums in two cycles, we would be arena-ready in two years globally, everywhere. We know that – but the difference between now and after *Afterglow*, is that I've always understood that Joe is a solo artist, as I am. His career is monumentally successful. I'm not going to get in Joe's way, and I'm going to continue to be busy. My diary is already full for next year, but my main love is writing music: writing is the most important thing. I write all the time, good, bad or indifferent, even the music people don't hear feeds my soul."

As the sum of all of these parts, it comes as no surprise that the new album sounds vibrant, ballsy and full of energy: Glenn is clear that the band – also featuring drummer Jason Bonham and keyboardist Derek Sherinian – were determined to play to their strengths. "BCC has a distinctive style, and I think that style came from the first song we wrote, 'Black Country', the push and the pull, 'bam bam', the message; it's epic, it's dramatic and it's bluesy. We have our own style, just as we are all aware of, say, Jimi Hendrix's style or George Harrison's for example.

"We wanted to make *BCC IV* an extension of where we started," he adds, "hence songs like 'Collide', 'Over My Head' and 'The Crow' all easily fall into the BCC catalogue. They are the sorts of songs that are in the genre of what we are. I think 'The Last Song For My Resting Place' is left-field, but all of Joe's songs are very much 'Joe's songs', he has something in his repertoire that makes them a little bit different."

Glenn's last tour of the Europe and UK had to be rescheduled from autumn to winter, an unexpectedly difficult time for him as his mother passed away. It was the strength of Glenn's fans that kept the show on the road, and allowed him to pull out all the stops for every performance – as he is quick to confirm. "I was unsure of England, Scotland, Wales and

"PEOPLE KNOW I'M A SINGER, BUT ON THE NEW BCC ALBUM, THEY'LL REALLY KNOW I'M A BASS PLAYER"

© Christie Goodwin

© Christie Goodwin

Ireland before my tour. I wasn't sure if I was connecting with my audience – but on the *Resonate* tour, I wasn't looking for sympathy or empathy, I was just expressing myself. I had the audience lit a little bit, I wanted to see if I was getting the message across during the spontaneous sections in the songs in the show. I could see they were reacting in a way that was sympathetic towards what I was going through at the time."

As a spiritual man, Glenn naturally experienced a myriad of emotions and feelings – but now feels he has come through the other side. "When you have your parents, you never think, or want to think, about their deaths. I couldn't think about it, but now it's different. When you go through it, and come through it, you become a man. Ninety minutes before the show at the Church in Leeds, my mum passed away. I walked out onstage, dressed in black, and I never wear all black. I looked at the audience: they all knew, and they looked at me. They were in tears – but it was beautiful, they were so compassionate."

There's no denying that Glenn is very much in the midst of a purple patch of songwriting: *BCC IV* is clear evidence of this. He takes a longer, pragmatic view of his music. "I think my last album and Joe's most recent album are both our strongest solo albums. I want to leave a legacy of music that people can listen to after I've gone, and for them to go 'Wow, this is a really great record'. This album certainly fits that mould. We're already talking about *BCC V*: there will be further planning so we don't end up in the same situation as last time, when there was no plan. I think Joe was in a different place last time. I don't know how he does it, and I've worked with many people, but I don't know anyone as busy as he is."

It would be rude not to ask the bass legend if he has any guiding words for the bass community – and his response isn't surprising if you have followed any part of Glenn's career. "Less is more: it's the notes I don't play that are just as important as the notes I do play, coming straight from my mentor James Jamerson. I sang with Stevie Wonder at a Jamerson tribute three years ago, and I spoke to James' wife and son – and now I'm in the Jamerson circle, so to speak, me being a Detroit nut of course. I had Nathan East playing with me on a track and he blew my mind – bloody hell, some of his bass licks! I'm always learning. I'll always be educating myself on the bass."

Black Country Communion release *BCC IV* on September 22 via Mascot Records. BCC play Wolverhampton Civic Hall (2 January 2018) and London Eventim Apollo (4 January 2018). Info: www.bccommunion.com.

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CHA-CHA-CHAT

Joe Shooman meets Klaus Flouride of the legendary Dead Kennedys

You're on tour in Brazil. Your bass is too. You get to the gig.

The bass doesn't...

A nightmare scenario – and one that befell Dead Kennedys bassist Klaus Flouride in 2013. Still missing four years later is his 1966 Fender Jazz in Lake Placid Blue, on which the So-Cal punk pioneer had played his jazzy, arpeggio-heavy, surf-indebted punk rock melodic lines for three decades.

"Even the flight crew was waiting for their luggage, but nothing came off the plane," he remembers. "It could be sitting over some guy's mantelpiece. My fantasy is that it one day finds its way back from the storage hangar, which isn't going to happen. I don't ache about it; I had it, I used it for a while. I'd like to think someone's using it, playing it, thinking, 'This is a great instrument'."

Step forward luthier Tony Schroom, who secretly built Mr. Flouride a new instrument that even featured the same stickers, scratches and battle scars.

"He wound the pickups himself: he made the equivalent of Seymour Duncan Quarter Pounders and put them on – tailpiece, bridge, everything. It sounds great, although it's heavier. That helps sustained notes like in [Dead Kennedys song] 'Moon Over Marin'. It's a thin line to walk to get that sustain but without getting the squeal. I don't want to use compression pedals, because that takes dynamics out of things."

Klaus Flouride (yes, he spells it that way deliberately, chemistry fans), born Geoffrey Lyall in 1949, has music in his blood. His musician father played in bands in New Orleans speakeasies from the late 1920s through the Depression years.

Lyall the younger was soon to pick up a Stella acoustic guitar before trading up to a Gibson and then a Silvertone electric. A gamut of pickup bands, garage messarounds and even the occasional gig led to the more serious proposition of a band called Thursday Parade.

"I was coming out of my one year of college. The band already had a guitarist, and power trios were the way to go with Cream, Hendrix et cetera. They asked me if I could play the bass and I said, 'Sure' – but I didn't, so I bought a Danelectro for 20 bucks," he continues.

The bassist namechecks the ubiquitous James Jamerson and the Motown bands, although he first became aware of bass as a separate instrument through the Beatles and Jack Bruce. "The live Cream stuff just left me cold," he notes. "I saw them once and it was just dreadful, but I did like Jack's playing as far as constructing counter-melodies: I realised it could be a semi-lead instrument."

That said, he recalls the transition from guitar to bass as 'as much a hindrance as a help' at first.

"I just wanted to fill in as much space as I could with as much weird stuff as I could. I didn't leave any air. That was something I've realised over the last 15 years, although something like [Kennedys song] 'The Prey' has a lot of air in it. If you want to make the stuff that you play stand out, you need to leave a lot around it."

Back to the late 60s, and enter Billy Squier, who enticed Lyall to the group Magic Terry & The Universe. "We were on the fringe of the Andy Warhol scene," he recalls, "We would go to [hip NYC bar] Max's Kansas City when it was a discotheque upstairs and a restaurant in the back. After that imploded, I played in mostly R&B and blues-orientated things, and I started learning about simplifying the bass."

Some of the more purist members of those groups encouraged Lyall to go for lessons, where he learned something very important.

"The tutor asked me to play with a pick, and then he asked me to play it with my fingers, and I sort of muddled through it after about five times," Lyall remembers. "He said, 'You play it much better with a pick, so what are you doing here?'"

"I said, 'Well, the band thought it was a good idea'. The tutor immediately said: 'Don't listen to them. Listen to yourself. What makes their opinion about your own playing better than yours?'"

That pick is a hefty .90mm, but Lyall's background in surf bands was an object lesson in how to play super-fast strums, particularly in songs like 'Forward To Death' or the fills in 'Holiday In Cambodia.'

"They're slides down the neck," he says. "Like something from 'Misirlou'," referring to the Dick Dale surf anthem heard in *Pulp Fiction*.

His other instrument is, perhaps surprisingly, the clarinet. "I don't pick it up that often, but when I do it's like getting back on a bike," he says. He also owns a rare C melody saxophone, which is pitched a tone higher than the B flat tenor sax more widely used. The clarinet can be heard on 'Terminal Preppie', and will also feature on a forthcoming Flouride solo compilation, the latest in a long line of LPs.

In the late 1970s Lyall moved to San Francisco, joining the Dead Kennedys and gaining his current moniker. He found himself amid the possibilities inherent in punk, although he was open to every genre of music out there.

"One of the people that influenced me in the late Seventies and early Eighties was Brian Eno, when I discovered the four albums he did before he went ambient – Roxy with the reins off, his solo stuff. The bass did interesting things; how he used instruments in general still sounds fresh. 'The Fat Lady Of Limbourg', for instance, has a prominent bass part – maybe even done on keyboard. As far as punk, Jimmy Wilsey of The Avengers was a young musician doing really interesting stuff that was really supportive of the song. He would do octaves, a simple but a really good idea, and I took that and ran with it with the Dead Kennedys."

The Kennedys' influence on the second and third generations of punk is immeasurable; their off-kilter rhythms, syncopated frenzy, hard-hitting black humour from frontman Jello Biafra and absolutely supercharged performances were instantly recognisable. The renamed Flouride's bass-lines range from the driven (see 'Police Truck', 'Too Drunk To Fuck') to the chordal ('Jock-O-Rama', 'Chickenshit Conformist').

These days he mostly uses the aforementioned unique rebuild on stage, but a Fender Bass IV is the weapon of choice for much of the *Bedtime For Democracy* album. Outside the Kennedys, he puts that bass to good use in offshoot acts the Legendary Stardust Cowboy and Granny's Drop.

"The first inclination is to play lead on it. I used it to do chords in the band Five Year Plan, and I used that also as a singer-songwriter. It can build and get intense, almost like playing Ramones chords on the bass when the song requires it."

Some of his favourite DK bass moments include the break in 'MP3 Get Off The Web' (formerly titled 'MTV Get Off The Air') and the double-string work on 'Holiday In Cambodia'.

"It's going for a Velvet Underground sort of feel," he says of the latter bass-line. "They'd have droning, so I droned the A and basically played 'Dazed And Confused' against it! I didn't realise at the time that's what it was... I didn't think I even liked Led Zeppelin that much. But sometimes things just happen, and they work."

He drops a bomb for every DKs nut: "The Kennedys are always fooling around with [new music], but we're always comparing it, as everyone else will, to [1980 debut album] *Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables*. Is it as catchy, as different as that album was?"

Millions of fans worldwide would love to find out.

The Dead Kennedys reformed in 2001 after a 15-year break, with a different vocalist: Ron 'Skip' Greer is on the mic these days. To Flouride's surprise and – one senses – bemusement, he has become an inspiration to another generation.

"I don't say, 'Of course, I got a free bass, because I'm Klaus Flouride'," he says. "We always go out after shows and meet the people who pay to see us playing. People call me 'Sir' and I always go, 'Do *not* do that to me. Do not do that *to yourself*'."

However, Flouride is hyper-aware of where he has reached as a musician. "My dad said, 'There's three million kids that can play guitar. It's an easy instrument. If you want to be the one that gets a bunch of people to watch you go crazy onstage, get a backup plan. Sometimes I'm onstage and I can watch the mayhem going on. And I think, I'm one of those three million kids that gets to actually have that happen."

Dead Kennedys play live at Bournemouth Old Fire Station (12 Oct) and the O2 Academy, Islington (13 and 14 Oct). Info: www.deadkennedys.com.

VIENNA CALLING

Colombian bassist Juan Garcia-Herreros, aka Snow Owl, isn't just a master musician – he's also a man on a mission. Kate Puttick caught up with the man himself to find out what he's up to, and how his latest educational venture will genuinely benefit the bass community

Many readers will recall the debut feature we ran last year with the Colombian-born, Austrian-resident musician Snow Owl, also known as Juan Garcia-Herreros, in which he explained his long career as a sideman with legends such as Elton John, his nomination for a Grammy, and his solo career.

We caught up with the great man recently to discover that not only is he continuing to blow minds worldwide with his solo tours and his amazing signature Neubauer Phoenix bass – he's also offering a very special opportunity to the wider bass world.

What are your projects right now, Juan?
Worldwide, the main project has been Snow Owl. It's going really well. Of course, as a sideman I'm also very fortunate to have some big names inviting me along. The best label I can find for my music is world jazz. Music that involves improvisation, and a high level of musicianship, but which also always includes roots from every member of the ensemble. I always feature something from each of their countries in my music. Every country I visit, I see something and want to have it. On my latest album, *The Blue Road*, it was an honour that members of the Vienna Philharmonic were performing – on a world jazz record. There's an unbelievable tradition of classical music in that city.

How do those two worlds combine? Vienna is the site of very studied music. How have people reacted to you bringing non-classical elements there?
I find it especially groundbreaking that we have had a master balafonist from Burkina Faso in Africa, speaking the *bambara* language underneath a wall of sound from the Philharmonic strings. To see those cultures in the same spot, performing together, is a statement for the world we're living in now. It's a sign of tolerance of acceptance: 'Let's work together and celebrate the human spirit'.

How did you enjoy the London Bass Guitar Show back in March this year?
The LBGS is extremely important in the bass world. What you guys are doing for the bass community is unbelievable. I see fathers bringing their children along and I find that unbelievable. I was there to present my signature bass, my 10-year anniversary bass with Andreas Neubauer. We call it the Phoenix, not just because of the 10-year collaboration but because last year he survived his battle with cancer. He has risen from the ashes. It was also a dream come true to see David Ellefson of Megadeth, just to see his mastery of picking bass. I was so excited about that.

How did you get into bass playing? Did other instruments come before it?
Flute was my first instrument, and then the piano. My brother was learning drums and needed a bass, and he said 'You'd better play bass'. I didn't want to – and look at me now! When you master any instrument you will find ways to cross borders with it. What fascinates me is the idea that you can take something and try and use it in ways it has never been used before.

What do you love about the bass?
It's the one instrument that influences the style of music, harmonic changes and the groove the most. It's unconsciously affecting people the most. As soon as the bass gets going with the drums, people start dancing. It doesn't matter what style of music it is, it can be orchestral, it can be anything that has a body. It's like a womb that everybody feels comfortable in!

What other gear do you use?
As far as gear goes, I'm very grateful to all of my endorsers. I never use any other strings other than Thomastik-Infeld strings, because they are designed especially for the bass. I use Vovox cables, because the transmission of the signal is never compromised, and DNA amplification from David Nordschow. It's an amazing handmade amplifier. Last but not least, everything from Basswitch, which is Jacques Ruppert in Luxembourg. Those guys are all my brothers.

Tell me about your charity work.
We have an organisation that used to be called Snow Owl, but now we call it Unity Through Arts. It's focused on helping refugees to integrate into whatever country they're in, either through music or language or whatever they need. If we can receive people with open arms, later they will not turn around and attack you. Music is always something that will heal that pain.

What are the JAMMUSICLAB University Scholarships that we've heard about?
Well, there's a new music university in Austria, the Jam Music Lab. It's a private university that specialises in jazz and pop music and I'm a teacher there. You can do a bachelor's degree there and the education you'll get will be fantastic, but of course it's expensive, so they're offering scholarships to gifted students who might otherwise not be able to afford to study there. One of the scholarships is going to a bass student from Colombia, who will be able to study with me, and they're going to offer places to students from other countries too. So please, if you're reading this interview in *BGM*, and you think you've got what it takes, get in touch.

Info: www.the-snow-owl.com. Musicians who are interested in applying for a scholarship are invited to send an application via www.jammusiclab.at.

HEAVY HITTER

Back with a new album, the phenomenal acoustic bassist Dmitry Lisenko talks tone, tuition and the Latvian way with Hywel Davies

The bass has always been a very versatile instrument. Who knew a wooden plank with a few strings bolted on could do so much? As it turns out, a lot more than we thought. Enter Dmitry Lisenko, a Latvian player who truly brings out the full rhythmic potential of the bass. Adopting the percussive style of modern acoustic guitar players such as Andy McKee, Lisenko has expanded the limits of what can be achieved with an unplugged four-string.

"I was always a huge fan of the guys who played percussive fingerstyle on acoustic guitars," he told *BGM* at this year's London Bass Guitar Show. "There's this huge scene with guitarists like Jon Gomm and a bunch of other players. So, one day I thought to myself, 'Okay, there must be some bass players out there who can do this...' Then I started to look online and didn't find any. I thought, 'I have to try it,' and I borrowed an

> **"THE HARDEST PART WAS ACTUALLY TEACHING MYSELF – BECAUSE I WAS ALONE, I HAD NO OTHER BASS PLAYERS TO LEARN FROM"**

acoustic bass from a friend. I wasn't sure if I was able to do it or whether I would like it, but I had to try to understand it and make it my own. I had to do it."

What's surprising is the fact that Lisenko has no previous experience with guitars beyond the bass. So how did he adapt, we ask? "I was into a lot of the tapping stuff before – and with this style they're quite similar. It was a bit easier for me to transform from a tapping style to a percussive style. The hardest part was actually teaching myself – because I was alone, I had no other bass players to learn from. I spoke with guitarists who do this, as well as a few drummers, to understand the rhythms to build from."

Taking to the acoustic like a fish to water, it wasn't long before Lisenko garnered some attention for his playing. "There's a bass players' competition in Russia, which is a really big event, so I was like, 'Okay, maybe I should enter'," he recalls. "This competition motivated me and got me to practise more, and I wrote my first song, 'Prometheus', for the event. It ended up being my most successful song. In the end, I won this competition, even though I had only been playing acoustic bass for two or three months. There were a lot of amazing players competing there, so I'm proud that I made it. It was a first step – and afterwards I was like, 'I have to continue this'."

From Russia to London, Lisenko has come a long way. Performing at the LBGS this year as a solo artist, and alongside his wife as the politically-charged art project, Karmafree, he left jaws unhinged. Though he's adopted this style with such grace, it's his artistic integrity that really makes him stand out.

"You have to try to be unique, find your own voice and your own way of expressing your emotions. Music is a very expressive art. Art is about expressing your thoughts and your ideas. Art is only interesting when it's unique, and it's only unique when it starts in its own way and becomes something different."

Info: www.dmitrylisenko.com. Dmitry Lisenko's new album *Minimalist* is out in September.

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KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Shonna Tucker, sometime bassist with Drive-By Truckers, returns with a new band, a new direction and an arsenal of cool bass gear. Alison Richter asks the questions

After eight years with the Drive-By Truckers, and another two with her own band, Eye Candy, bassist Shonna Tucker was ready for a break. She moved home to Killen, Alabama, "just up the road" from her parents and family, with one goal in mind: a hiatus from the music industry. "I was exhausted spiritually and personally," she says. "I wanted time to get grounded and find myself, and in order to do that, I needed something completely different from what I'd been doing for the last decade."

She was tending to livestock and driving a tractor when she got the call from keyboardist Spooner Oldham: singer-songwriter Pegi Young needed a bass player to record her then-upcoming album, *Raw*, and for the accompanying tour dates. "I had all intentions of taking 100 per cent time off from music," she says, "but I couldn't say no, so I changed my mind real fast!"

Tucker lives 15 minutes away from Oldham and guitarist/bandmate Kelvin Holly, both mainstays of the Muscle Shoals music scene and her longtime friends and colleagues. Oldham's countless credentials include Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge. Holly's résumé features Little Richard, Bobby Bland, Amazing Rhythm Aces and Gregg Allman. Drummer Phil Jones, who lists Tom Petty and Joe Walsh among his many credits, rounds out Young's band, the Survivors.

It seemed obvious to bring Tucker into the ensemble. Young's roots include R&B, country, and rock; add bluegrass to the mix and it's the path Tucker has walked since childhood. "A lot of people ask what my style is," she says. "I think it's Southern country, Southern soul. I can't help but have a little bit of everything in me, being from this area. So I think working with Pegi is a perfect fit. It's very natural, and of course Spooner and Kelvin being with her for so many years and writing a lot of the music, they bring that Muscle Shoals sound."

She was drawn to music through her father's record collection, particularly his George Jones and Creedence Clearwater Revival albums. Aged eight, she asked him to teach her some guitar chords. He quickly recognised her talent and gravitation toward bass notes. For her tenth birthday, she received a Hondo bass. "I'd sit in my bedroom for hours, playing along with albums and practising," she says. At 15, she bought herself a Fender Jazz and never looked back. "It fit my teenage hands and it looked cool," she says. "I saved my money, bought it, and immediately understood why people like Fenders so much."

Unfortunately, the Jazz was stolen during her first years in the Drive-By Truckers. In turn, she was gifted "an incredible Precision bass, white with a reverse headstock", which became a game-changer in her sound. "We tuned down a whole step in the Truckers," she says. "The Precision was chunkier, and it held and dealt with the tuning-down a little bit better. I fell in love with it, and now I own two Precision basses."

She keeps her sound and rig as bare bones and direct as possible: TC Electronic PolyTune on the floor, patch cable, Ampeg SVT 410 cab and SVT Classic head. She swears by D'Addario Chromes XL medium-gauge flatwound strings that she never changes – noting "I like them funky and dirty" – and never uses a pick. "I've tried them a couple of times," she says, "but they fly out of my hands. They're not my thing."

Tucker officially joined the Survivors in March 2016, and tracked six songs for *Raw*, two of which made the album: 'Do I Ever Cross Your Mind' and 'These Boots Are Made For Walkin''. The timeline between her move home and the studio was close to a year, as Young was in the midst of a divorce and recording sessions were sometimes delayed or rescheduled.

It worked out perfectly for Tucker, because those months gave her the hiatus she originally wanted, and the time to ease back in via a few solo performances and a lot of songwriting. "It's incredible," she says of her new opportunity. "It's the best gift I've ever been given, the way it all played out."

Info: www.shonnatucker.com.

> "AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT, I HAD BLENDED MARK KING AND GEDDY LEE'S STYLES INTO A PRETTY TASTY STEW"

MIRACLE MAN

Bill Clements is a bassist like no other. After the tragic event that led him to lose one of his arms, he has defined his own style — the likes of which we've never seen before. Hywel Davies meets him

Jazz drumming legend Art Blakey once said: "Jazz washes away the dust of everyday life". At its core, the maxim brings to light the universal power which music has over us. Bassist Bill Clements is living proof of this.

Having picked up the bass at 13 years old, Clements sculpted a playing style that really got people talking. However, days turned from blue to grey one fateful afternoon back in 1989, when he suffered a life-changing accident while at his factory job. It cost him his right arm. Most of us would have lost all hope – but not Clements. It would take a lot more than that to get in the way of his playing. Simply put, the man is a beast of a bass player – as *BGM* found out earlier this year.

"I had a pathological thing driving me that most people don't," says Clements. "I was using the bass to sweep back the tide of insanity. I was already really monastic about my approach to the instrument back then, and once the accident happened, as a way of trying to focus away from the constant pain, which has never really gone away, that's how I put in eight hours of practice a day."

"At the time of the accident, I had blended Mark King and Geddy Lee's styles into a pretty tasty stew," he continues. "People would dig it and I had that, 'Bill's the man!' kind of vibe in the music community. I'd never had that feeling before, so there was no way I was going to give up the title. Also, the fact that the doctors were telling me that I should give up on any idea of ever playing again made me think, 'I'll show you fuckers!' The first few years after the accident, I was playing every note on the neck, every second of every day. It didn't matter if I didn't make it musical; that was the bottom line."

Clements has poured thousands of hours into mastering his new technique. Rather than compensating the force of two hands into one, his style revolves around the opposite – tapping around the fretboard with the lightest of touches, always with great precision.

"A lot of the people who find themselves in a similar position to mine, they start over-muscling it," he says. "They think like, 'Oh man, that guy's hand has to be really strong to be able to play something like that'. That's true, but it comes under endurance and being able to play for seven hours, that's where the strength comes in. Every spot on the fretboard has a different tension to its distance to the bridge. The mass of each fret has a talking point, a point past which applying more strength yields no more results. Once you find the talking point of it, you stop overmuscling it and you'll get to know the instrument. Each position on the neck has a personality – and you get to know the character of each of them."

It still comes as a surprise to many listeners when they hear him for the first time. None were more taken back than one up-and-coming pianist Stevie Wonder, when the two crossed paths at NAMM 2012.

"He was walking around with his family and security," recalls Clements. "He heard me and he was like, 'Find where that's coming from – I want to check that out'. That's the beautiful part: until his people saw me playing they had no idea that I had one hand. When they told him, he was like, 'How are you doing that?' He couldn't reconcile what he was hearing to how it was being achieved. He stood there and listened to me play for quite some time. He shook my hand, I made a few fanboy compliments to him and he went on about his business."

Last year, Clements participated in a Channel 4 advert promoting the 2016 Summer Paralympics, *We're The Superhumans*, which won the film Grand Prix at Cannes. Only three minutes long, it's a great watch next time you visit Youtube: Clements provides his talents on the overdub track, a version of 'Yes I Can' by Sammy Davis, Jr.

"You've got to know who you are as a player, and who you want to be as a player, otherwise you'll be like a ship without a rudder. You need to know what's in your heart creatively. I'm not trying to be the best businessman in the world, I'm not trying to be the greatest entertainer in the world – I'm just trying to be the best Bill Clements I can."

Info: www.reverbnation.com/billclements.

SPEAKING VOLUMES

Skindred's Dan Pugsley has been pounding out heavy grooves across the world for 19 years. Hywel Davies ducks for cover

Let's face it, there's nothing that gets our heads banging harder or bodies jumping higher quite like a brain-drilling groove. In recent times, few metal bands have fully embraced rhythm quite like Newport's Skindred. Bringing vibrancy and colour to a gun-metal grey world, since 1998 Skindred have brought the bounce back into metal. Mixing a plethora of different genres from reggae to drum'n'bass, bassist Dan Pugsley is as innovative a bassist as you can get.

"I think we have a heartbeat in our music," says Pugsley, asked about the band's sound. "When people talk about the bounce, we're really conscious of that. We all dabble in different spectrums of life and in separate sorts of music. There's the rock and reggae thing, but I think the heartbeat of this band is that dancehall element."

"In this band we all pull in different directions," he adds. "A typical Skindred song would have more of a groove element to it, without a rock element. We take that and we try and flip it, turning the beat the other way. There's a lot of experimenting – it does take a while for us to sit down and go, 'This is how we're going to play it.'"

It can be very easy to hunker down in a place where you feel too comfortable with your style and sound. Pugsley, on the other hand, likes to keep his palette fresh, even making the transition to a five-string, which resulted in him having to relearn the band's entire back catalogue.

"I like to try different things – and for a while I was used to playing four-strings in drop tunings. I travel with my effects and my basses, and it was getting to the point where I would have to travel with four basses. I really didn't want to have to deal with that, so because Mike [Demus, guitars] likes playing in a lot of different tunings, I made the decision to learn everything again on a five-string, tuned in fourths."

He adds: "I'm a four-string player: if you ask my friends, they laugh when they hear the idea that I'm a five-string player. But I felt playing a four-string in drop tuning was like losing my voice. It felt like it was just about making the shape based on a riff, and it felt as if that wasn't my style – as if this wasn't how I learned at all. That's how the whole five-string thing started."

So, what bass did he switch to, we ask? "I play a Dingwall NG2, but it's been converted to a regular Combustion model. It has that pickup setup but with a Darkglass preamp – it's really cool," he says. "I also do a lot of stuff with octavers. I set them really high and dry, so it almost sounds like a synth. They're sub sounds, and the only way to get them is to play really high. If I tuned a four-string to A-D-G-C, I wouldn't have the range to play those parts, so I have to do it on a five-string."

Skindred are fast approaching their second decade as a band, and still Pugsley finds new ways to spice up his playing. Dexterous in both fingerstyle and pick styles, his evolution as a player is something quite special.

"For the first record, I played with just fingers, all in drop-C. The second record, I started experimenting with three fingers. Then I started experimenting with a pick and tucking it into my hand. I try to change it up every time: I find that versatility, as a bass player, to be quite attractive. I'll try and do something different every time because I want to progress as a musician."

Skindred have earned their reputation as one of the most energetic live bands around: you haven't lived until you've taken part in the infamous Newport Helicopter, which we highly encourage you to look up right now. So, what words of advice does he leave for us mere mortals?

"I know it sounds cheesy, but it's all in the groove – you need that groove. As a bass player, notes are superfluous. If you're in the pocket of the groove, you can get away with everything else. Even if you don't know the piece, you can always sit in that groove. It's about having your own voice in the groove – that's my thing."

Info: www.skindred.net

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SHAKE IT

Alonza Bevan of Britpop stalwarts Kula Shaker revisits the K days with Mike Brooks

Kula Shaker were impressively visible throughout the mid-90s thanks to the 'flying off the shelves' success of their 1996 debut album, *K*, although with interest in Britpop dwindling thereafter in favour of mainstream pop and dance music, the band found themselves on something of a sticky wicket which led to them disbanding. Having now released five albums, including last year's *K 2.0* and a 20th anniversary release of *K*, the Kula Shaker train is firmly back on track. We recently caught up with Alonza Bevan to get the lowdown on where the K train is heading...

How has the band progressed since the 1990s, Alonza?

I'd like to think our playing has come on a bit – but rock'n'roll has never been about technical ability. Sometimes the best thing to do on bass is bang out eighths on the root note, something I would never have entertained 20 years ago. Over the last 20 years, we've produced an album every four years, which is a pretty relaxed schedule when you think about it. Our audience are very patient and loyal; we see some familiar faces but also some new ones. They're still the usual bunch of misfits and crazies who are always much appreciated. Back in the 90s, Sony pushed us as a pop act – so a lot of young fans were too young to see us live.

Last year saw performances around the world. How did it feel getting back in the saddle?

It's quite an energetic show, and I started to realise the design faults of the human knee! Mentally, the hardest thing is being away from your family, and staying sane on long-haul flights isn't easy. The music is the best bit: for one and a half hours a day, it all seems to make sense. It was quite a challenge trying to relearn songs that we wrote over 20 years ago, some of which we'd never played live. Despite a fair amount of pre-production, it wasn't until we'd been on the road for several months that things really started to work and the fairy dust started to sprinkle.

Why did the band split in 1999?

I think the main reason was that it stopped being fun. We had success on our first album, so when your second album 'only' sells half a million copies, that's seen as a failure – how times have changed! There was a lot of pressure, and we were young and naive. It didn't help our career, but I don't think we'd be playing together now if we hadn't split when we did.

Does modern technology make it easier to keep the band running?

I hate what it has done to a lot of modern recorded music, but we couldn't make records without it. It has allowed us to build a studio, which would have been unaffordable 20 years ago, and to share ideas and work when we're living in different countries. I love writing and producing music, but when it comes to playing live music in a band, I'm a bass player and proud of it. In terms of how that affects my writing and ideas, I try to make sure everything grooves, swings and moves, whatever you want to call it: I think that's hugely important in every kind of music.

You were always seen with 70s Fender Jazz basses back in your heyday.

I love my Fender Jazz, but after long service in the field, she's been retired to the studio. I played a Moulon Jazz bass on the last tour, they're really great handmade instruments with an obsessive attention to detail harking back to the pre-CBS days. I use a hollowbody Mosrite with flatwounds for some Carol Kaye-style character. I also have a double bass, which has another level of low end and is a lot of fun in the studio or with the local folk band. I still use a Matchless Thunderchief, which is a fantastic amp reminiscent of an old Hiwatt. I don't use many effects, occasionally a fuzz for a bit of nastiness. I like a pure sound; a nice guitar into a nice amp and let the fingers do the rest.

Any abiding memories of the success you enjoyed first time round?

It's all a bit jumbled and blurry but I remember Sting coming into our dressing room at the El Rey in Los Angeles. He pointed at me and said 'bass player' which was an obvious highlight!

Info: www.kulashaker.co.uk.

Bass Guitar Magazine

VOTE AND WIN!

Our December issue, on sale on November 14, is our 150th – a stellar achievement in the world of publishing! – and to celebrate we'll be publishing two essential lists in that very issue. The first is a run-down of the 150 coolest bass parts ever, and the other is your list of the 150 greatest electric bass players of all time. Both will be chosen by you, the readers, so vote today. You can either use the form below (or a photocopy of it) and post it to BGM Poll, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA, UK or vote online at https://goo.gl/Eu7K3a.

Get your votes in by Friday 29 September* and three entrants randomly picked out of the *BGM* hat will win a Jackson David Ellefson signature bass, each worth around £400. So get your thinking caps on, bassists, we want to hear from you. This is going to be fun (and controversial)!

*For full terms and conditions, see the competition site at the address given above

My nominations for the coolest bass parts ever recorded, 1 being the greatest:
Please supply song title and artist

1 ____________________
2 ____________________
3 ____________________
4 ____________________
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My nominations for the greatest electric bass player ever, 1 being the greatest:

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Thanks for participating, good luck with the competition – and we'll reveal the results in November!

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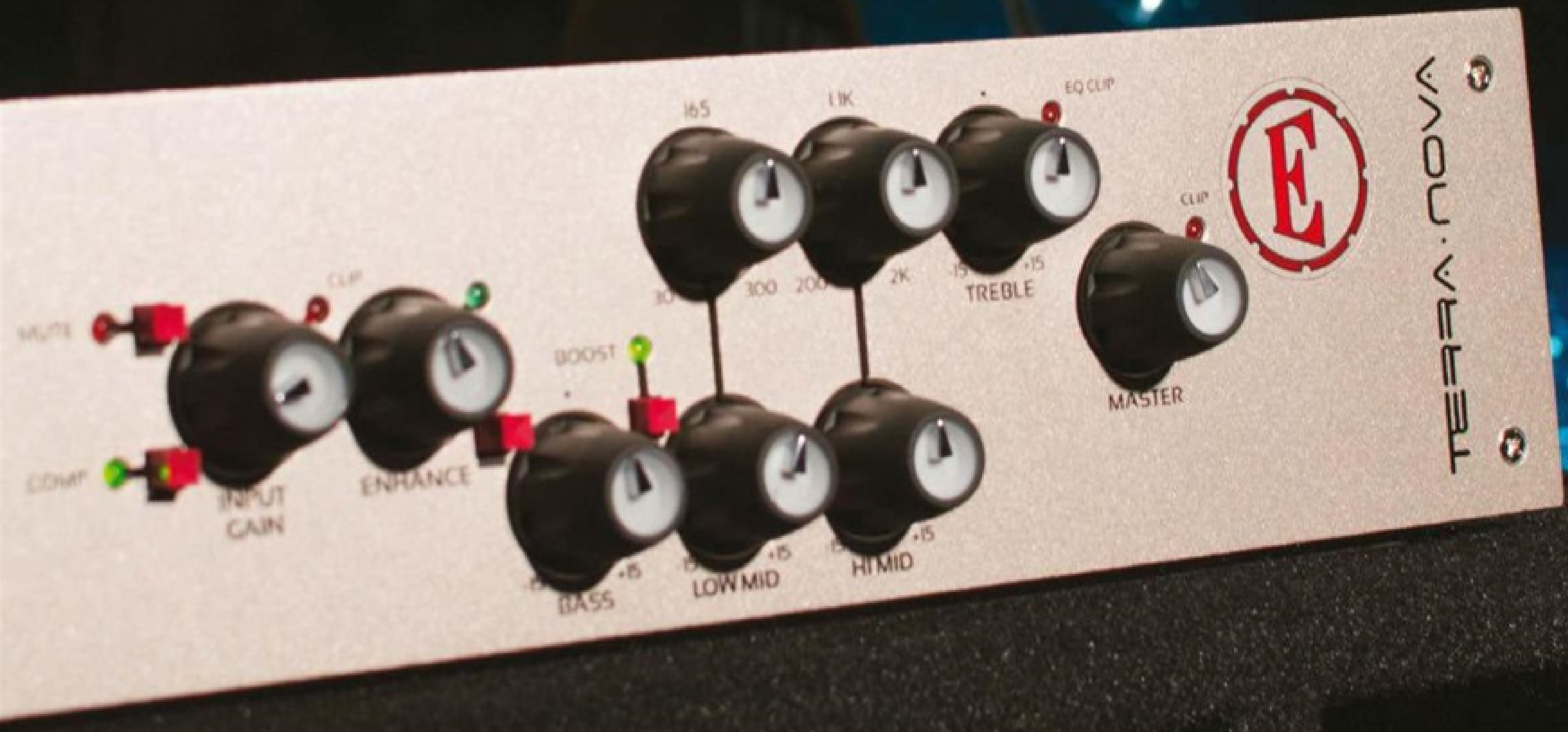

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© Digital Mechanic

OUR MAN MURRAY

With a new Snakecharmer album, Second Skin, scaling the charts, Mike Brooks catches up with one of melodic rock's favourite bassists, Neil Murray, for a conflab on life after We Will Rock You

The formation of Snakecharmer, with its cast of rock luminaries, wasn't an instant thing: it actually goes back to the 90s. Tell us how the seeds were sown, Neil?
After playing with Brian May for the second time, to promote his album *Another World* in 1998, I started working with the two original Whitesnake guitarists, Micky Moody and Bernie Marsden, in a couple of different bands that we had – but it wasn't enough to cover everything. The musical *We Will Rock You* allowed me the opportunity to go off and do other things on the side; the bands with Micky and Bernie were working simultaneously, and Snakecharmer was properly formed in 2011. Micky stayed until 2015 and his role has now been covered by Simon McBride. Harry [James, drummer, also Magnum and Thunder] and Adam [Wakeman, keyboardist] are always busy, so everything takes a while to pull together. Snakecharmer is quite fixed in terms of the arrangements, and ultra-professional. I've also been working with Bernie on his own material and he's regularly gigging; with him I'm just the bass player, but there is a lot of 'seat of your pants' improvising. You have to be ready for it – but I like it!

WWRY was a runaway success – but it had a tricky start, didn't it?
None of us thought it was going to last as long as it did, maybe no more than a few months, but it was a totally novel experience. Brian May himself thought I wouldn't be interested, but Spike [Edney, keyboardist] notified me about it and I had to audition with 30 other bass players. I had to prove that I could follow a conductor and read. You couldn't do it seven or eight times a week without taking time off or doing other music, but it did cushion me from having to find other full-time projects. No one thing is able to support you now, unless you're in a really big band with a retainer, or a long-running musical for example. You have to search for income and opportunities from all sorts of different areas, whether it's online lessons, selling merchandise, doing clinics or whatever.

> "AS A BASSIST, YOU HAVE TO BORROW FROM EVERYWHERE, PUT IT TOGETHER AND MAKE IT YOUR STYLE. PUT SOME INTEREST INTO YOUR BASS-LINES!"

You teach at ACM in Guildford as well as performing clinics and attending bass camps. What do you teach your students?
There are disparities in the standard of each student – and as a teacher you learn a lot from each situation. As a bassist, you have to borrow from everywhere, put it together and make it your style. Put some interest into your bass-lines! What connects with the vast percentage of the world's population are tunes, so the tune aspect is what I'm here to try and impart. So many players are stuck in a bass-playing rut where they haven't really explored the possibilities. When I was coming up, I was very fortunate that there were many bass players who were quite upfront in the music – the likes of Jack Bruce, John Entwistle and Paul McCartney. If I hear different ways of playing something, I stick them all into what I'm doing.

Any recent changes to your arsenal?
I'm using a Sandberg California TM at the moment, which covers a lot of ground – but if I need something more individual, I have a Modulus Graphite with a solid, firm-sounding midrange. I have different instruments for different projects, although I'd prefer not to, but if you have to sound like another player or require a specific sound or tone, it's very nice to have that instrument available to you. Amp-wise, I have an ATS and a couple of great Barefaced cabinets which I'm very impressed with. I always feel that I need to be able to plug into anything and make it work, rather than rely on a piece of gear that I can't live without.

After your long and varied career, what would you describe as the path to ultimate musical happiness?
In the career sense, you're better off being in one band your whole life, providing they're successful and the band's constantly evolving. But for me, for musical satisfaction, I'd rather do lots of different things.

Second Skin **by Snakecharmer is out now.**
Info: www.snakecharmer.org

POISON US

Tony Dolan, once of Brit-metallers Atomkraft, returns with Venom Inc and some serious bass gear. Let's hear Tone talk, well, tone

For our new album, *Ave*, Jeff [Dunn, guitars] sent the songs up to Tony [Bray, drums], who recorded them up in Newcastle: then I flew over to Jeff's place in Portugal and slammed down the bass in a week. A friend of ours helped us to remaster it and the whole album was done in a month. We'd have preferred for the three of us to be in a room together working out ideas, but we'd been on the road together already so we knew what direction we were going in. We knew we just had to be us, write the songs and put them out. Whether people like it or if they think it's shite, it doesn't matter: we still have to do it.

I've just been endorsed by a Dutch company called Bo-El. They have a bass called the Big Generator, which is lovely. I was in Holland and they showed me this bass, the Deluxe four-string with a purple finish. They've just sent me a second one with a solid ash body. They have a 35" scale, which really works because we tune down to C sharp. I didn't want to go to five-string basses this time, I've had a couple of those before and I never felt that comfortable with the low B string.

I've also got a 1972 blonde Rickenbacker 4001 at home, and I love it, but the tone isn't right for this band. I've also got an original 1979 Overwater in a Destroyer shape, and what I love about that bass is the slim neck and the sweeping notes.

Generally I use an Ampeg SVT 3 and a rackmount Sansamp DI, but if we're touring I'll just put a Bass DI stompbox Sans in my pedalboard. There's a chorus and a digital delay in there too – the combination of those with the Bo-El basses is incredible. We've got a 32-date US tour to do now, so I'm ready!

Venom Inc's album *Ave* is out now on Nuclear Blast. Info: www.venom-inc.com.

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

ITALIA Maranello Cavo

FENDER Flea Signature Jazz

HOFNER H500/1-KV-0 60th Anniversary Violin Bass

ACG Salace E-Type

ELECTRO-HARMONIX Battalion Bass Preamp/DI

SEVER Tone Up Bass Bridge

ITALIA
Maranello Cavo

Che chitarra bella! Joel McIver pours a glass of Chianti and straps on this retro Italian beauty

John Hornby Skewes
www.jhs.co.uk

£779

The ever-reliable John Hornby Skewes, distributors into the UK of fine gear since time immemorial, have let us have their new Italia bass, and what a beast it is. More glittery up close than these photos would suggest, the Cavo would seem on first sight to fit most easily into a glam or soul band – although as we always say, there are no rules here. Pick it up, plug it in and let's have a strum, amici...

Build Quality

Thanks to its chambered body, the Cavo is a doddle to pick up and swing around (carefully...), so anyone sick of barn-door basses will be off to a fine start. If you're not completely mesmerised by the finish

and incapable of movement, check the inside of the body through the F holes – they're not F shaped, but you know what we mean. There's a neat certificate in there, and plenty of room for your picks when (not if) you drop them inside mid-song.

A quick look around the bass reveals a very steampunk two-piece bridge that is both solid and accessible, reasonably decent machine heads and a set neck for that 60s vibe. Two pickups and three pots – volume, tone, pickups blend – keep the chrome-and-green colour scheme simple and attractive. The neck is grippy but manoeuvrable, and the frets are dressed as they should be and smoothly buffed at the ends.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £779
Made In | South Korea
Body | Mahogany, chambered; Racing Green or Translucent Cocoa finishes
Neck | Mahogany
Neck join | Set neck
Fretboard | Rosewood, 20 frets
Scale length | 30"
Pickups | 2 x Italia Toaster bass humbuckers
Controls | Volume, tone, pickup blend
Hardware | Italia machine heads, Tune-O-Matic bridge with Italia Stop tailpiece

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Beauteous finish, authentically retro sound
Minus | Nostalgia comes at a hefty price
Overall | Vintage bass fans will have a lot of fun here

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"A MIDS- AND TOP-HEAVY RANGE THAT HAS '1963' WRITTEN ALL OVER IT"

Sounds And Playability

The tone you get from the Cavo will be instantly familiar if you're acquainted with hollow-body basses. Bitey, edgy, punchy, all these words apply: it's a mids- and top-heavy range that has '1963' written all over it. Big low end is not available, although you can beef that up with the right preamp if you wish; still, the Cavo tone should cut through more or less any pesky guitar frequency, making it applicable in various environments.

We liked the pickup blend control, detented centrally to let you know when both pickups are at full power: sweeping from full right to full left and back allows you to appreciate the tonal differences between the two units. Both do their job very well, given the limitations of the design and the makers' obvious intention to produce a vintage-sounding instrument.

There's no thumb rest, unless you use the top of one of the pickups right at the front or back of the body, so fingerstyle players may need to do the old 'rest your thumb on the E string' trick. You can actually use the top F hole as a thumb anchor if you wish, although you might get some funny looks from the rest of the band. It may be a moot point, as it happens, because pick playing is where this instrument really shines. That clicky, Motown sound is just a .80mm bit of Tortex away.

Conclusion

You'll enjoy playing this bass. Our only caveat is that it's a touch expensive: you're not really getting a wide tone range, and the 20-fret neck is obviously not designed for extensive soloing in high registers. At £779, there's plenty of competition, so look around before you buy. Then again, that finish and the sheer retro joy of playing the Cavo may make it worthwhile for you. Either way, give it some attenzione.

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FENDER

Flea Signature Jazz

Any bass with Flea connotations is going to draw a lot of attention – and none more so than this signature model from Fender. Mike Brooks gets his funk on

Guitar Guitar
www.guitarguitar.co.uk

£1,035

One mention of Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Michael 'Flea' Balzary and whole swathes of the bass-playing community fall into a trance – and with good reason. For a certain generation of players, he was the figurehead that turned their heads, and ears, towards the virtues of the bass guitar, as Mark King did a decade earlier. Flea has had previous links with several different instruments of note: this Fender came about after the company created a signature model based on a 1961 Shell Pink Jazz given to Flea by a (rather generous) fan. Made in Mexico and just breaching the £1000 price mark, this may well represent good

"AT JUST OVER £1000, SIMILAR ALTERNATIVES CAN BE FOUND AT A CHEAPER PRICE AND SURE, YOU ARE PAYING FOR THE FLEA CONNECTION"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1035
Made In | Mexico
Colour | Shell Pink
Body | Alder
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 20
Pickups | 2 x Dual Pure Vintage 64 single-coil pickups
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Dual stacked volume and tone controls
Hardware | Aged chrome hardware, Fender vintage-style elephant ear machine heads, Fender vintage-style bridge
Weight | 4.2 kg
Case/gig bag included Gigbag
Left-hand option available No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Solidly built, warm tones
Minus | Not cheap for a Mexican bass
Overall | A fine bass on its own merits, signature or not

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

value to many players. Or does the Flea name simply disguise the fact that this is just another relic-ed Jazz? Read on and we'll find out!

Build Quality

As most players will be familiar with the essential features of Jazz basses, let's cut to the chase. The Shell Pink alder body bears all the usual Jazz hallmarks but with plenty of ageing to replicate Flea's own bass. Even the four-ply tortoiseshell scratchplate hasn't escaped unscathed, while both the body and neck have had a Road Worn nitrocellulose lacquer finish applied, giving the whole instrument a played-in feel. The chamfering and contouring make the bass very comfortable to wear and although there is some headstock bias, it sits perfectly when placed on a strap.

The neck is very much what you would expect of a Jazz bass; slim dimensions, built for speed and comfort, with a 38mm nut, 19mm string spacing at the bridge and an inviting C-shaped neck profile. The action feels a little high but is easily rectified, and generally, the overall setup is decent, with no sharp fret edges and a well-seated neck pocket. To complete the vintage vibe, a bone nut has been fitted, aged white dots adorn the rosewood fingerboard – with even older-looking aged position markers along the side of the neck – and vintage-style reverse tuners, which turn smoothly without resistance.

The old-school features don't end there. Dual stacked volume and tone controls have been utilised, in keeping with the aged model this is based on, and perfectly complement the pair of Pure Vintage 64 single-coil pickups. If you're wondering where the signature is, flip the bass over, where you will see Flea's name engraved into the neck plate.

"PUT SIMPLY, THIS IS A FINE BASS ON ITS OWN MERITS"

Sounds And Playability

The natural character of this particular bass is warm and rounded, which is not what I was expecting. On plugging the Jazz in, although it had the sonic attributes that any twin single coil-equipped bass will display. It felt and sounded less responsive and lively than, say, the Geddy Lee model we looked at last issue. That's not a bad thing, it's just different; the Flea Jazz is smoother and darker-sounding than the Geddy. In terms of performance, the pickups are powerful, offering plenty of forthright presence for a passive instrument. The bridge pickup, in particular, sounds punchy and honky without being too brittle.

Thankfully, the stacked controls are functional through their complete turn, so there is plenty of light and shade on offer when bringing the tone controls into play. Although some players prefer the volume/volume/tone arrangement on a Jazz, this particular setup works very well, and perhaps offers a little more tonal flexibility to the player. The familiar Jazz 'bounce' and 'burp' are still very much present, while the neck pickup rounds the overall tone out nicely. It also does a passable impersonation of a split-coil pickup, should you be after a more mellow tone. Jazz basses are well known for their slap tones, of course, and this bass is equally adept in that department.

Although it's not even close to Flea's Music Man, Wal or Modulus tones, this particular Jazz has much going for it and in terms of playability, it is a fine bass to get stuck into and spend some time with. It not only covers the obvious funk rock persuasions you would expect, but is equally at home with other musical styles. This is why the Fender Jazz is the most successful bass of all time, as it covers so many musical bases so well. No-one ever lost an audition because they owned a Fender Jazz...

Conclusion

Put simply, this is a fine bass on its own merits, providing old-school looks and vibe with funky sounds, solid sonic delivery and fine playability. At just over £1000, similar alternatives can be found at a cheaper price and sure, you are paying for the Flea connection – but then the bass is made in Mexico, rather than the US factory, to make it affordable. It's certainly a bass worth checking out, whether you're a Flea fan or not.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £6150
Made In | Germany
Colour | Gloss white
Body | Flame maple (back and sides), spruce (top wood)
Neck | Maple, 30" scale
Neck Joint | Set neck
Nut Width | 42mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 22
Pickups | 2 x Hofner staple nickel pickups
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume x 2, tone x 2
Hardware | Chrome and black Hofner hardware, ebony bridge
Weight | 2.4 kg
Case/gig bag included | Yes
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Impressive visuals
Minus | Limited tonal display – and that pricetag
Overall | A very impressive package for the Hofner devotee

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■□□□□

HOFNER
H500/1-KV-0 60th Anniversary Violin Bass

Celebrating an anniversary is one thing, but a commemorative instrument and package of limited goodies is another, especially for over £6000. Mike Brooks insures himself before opening the box

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

£6150

Not only have Hofner celebrated their 60th anniversary in the past 12 months, the Beatles' album *Revolver* also reached its half century – so it comes as no surprise that this bass features artwork from that album, designed by Klaus Voormann, who created the original album cover. This run of instruments has been limited to 60 pieces, of which our review model is number 30: the package includes

a certificate of authenticity, a limited edition art print, a coffee cup, a pen and box, a Hofner strap, a Hofner fuzz pedal, a CD, a set of 'Teacup' control knobs and a Hofner bullet case. The package is impressive – but how good is the actual instrument?

Build Quality

Handmade in Germany, the bass features the original 1956 headstock – not seen on reissue instruments in all that time – and an original oval control panel. Holding the bass for the first time, you get the impression that it is a delicate instrument and that some care should be taken with it. The violin body design retains all of its visual impact, but the stark white body, black binding and impressive artwork is quite a departure from what we're used to seeing on a Hofner bass. With no contouring at all, the slab-like physical attributes aren't the most comfortable to get used to, although the lightweight nature of the instrument and balance make up for it.

The ebony bridge and tailpiece look rather delicate – although I've no doubt that they do an admirable job, otherwise why would Hofner have stuck with the design? Fitted with Hofner black tapewound strings, the bass will no doubt have a vintage tone, very much in keeping with the instrument's history and most notable user. The control setup is tightly spaced, with two volume and two tone controls on a white control plate,

> "SO TAKING MY KID GLOVES OFF, WHAT CAN WE DEDUCE FROM THIS? IT'S A HIGHLY DESIRABLE PACKAGE IF YOU'RE INTO THIS SORT OF THING, BUT THE QUESTION IS, WILL YOU BE BUYING IT TO PLAY, OR TO OWN IN THE HOPE IT MIGHT BE WORTH CONSIDERABLY MORE IN DECADES TO COME?"

and in keeping with the overall look, the Hofner staple nickel pickups are also finished in black.

The set neck is resplendent in its gloss white finish, the dark rosewood fingerboard fulfilling the 'black and white' theme nicely. The rounded C-shaped neck profile gives the bass some needed bulk, and the short 30" scale means the bass is ideally suited to players with small hands or short fingers. The setup is very professional and as you would expect, the level of finishing on such a limited instrument is exceptional. Needless to say, there were no obvious sharp fret ends.

Sounds And Playability

Hofner basses have always had a sound of their own, and this bass is no different. The construction, scale length and choice of strings all contribute to a hollow, almost muted acoustic tone, not unlike a rubber-stringed instrument such as an Ashbory. Plug in and the identifiable Hofner tones leap out at you, without too much variation. Using the volume controls, soloing each pickup reveals some tonal differentiation, but not a huge amount. The neck pickup is as rounded and full-bodied as you would expect, but the the bridge pickup really doesn't offer too much in the twang department, just a slightly less bass-heavy response.

The tone controls do offer some tonal colour, but if you're looking for biting definition or a tone to project your playing, this is not the bass for you – but let's be honest about this whole package. It's aimed at the Hofner aficionado and Beatles fans, rather than the general bassist who may need an array of tones and the sort of bass performance that the Hofner simply isn't designed to provide. It's unlikely that you would use such an instrument as a working bass, and rightly so, although it should certainly be admired and played casually for enjoyment. After all, who knows what this package could be worth in years to come.

Conclusion

So taking my kid gloves off, what can we deduce from this? It's a highly desirable package if you're into this sort of thing, but the question is, will you be buying it to play, or to own in the hope it might be worth considerably more in decades to come? £6000 can buy a lot of bass, or basses, after all. It's unique, quirky and a little odd, but a pleasure to play all the same.

ACG
Salace E-Type

Mike Brooks investigates this five-string fretless from AC Guitars – and asks if there's something rather good in the water north of the border

AC Guitars
www.acguitars.co.uk

£2600

Scottish luthier Alan Cringean's creations are always attention-grabbing, so when he offered us this bass for review at this year's London Bass Guitar Show, who were we to turn him down? A custom bass in every respect, this instrument is packed to the brim with interesting features, custom-designed hardware and a sophisticated electronics package. Care to take a look?

Build Quality

The striking singlecut body shape may take a while to work out, but it's mightily comfortable to wear, helped greatly by the extensive rear contouring and sculpting, front chamfer and lower cutaway. It also has an unintrusive neck joint due to its set neck construction. There is some noticeable headstock bias, but the lower horn design helps the bass to sit well against the player when seated – and when placed on a strap, there are no balance issues of note.

From the back, the multi-timbered body, with its swamp ash core and wenge back facing, looks luscious; swing round to the front and the fratal birch top with its cream finish resembles a particularly delicious form of ice cream. Not that that's a bad point, it's just that we haven't seen anything

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2600
Made In | UK
Colour | Cream
Body | Swamp ash (core), wenge (back facing), fratal birch (top facing)
Neck | 7-piece laminate of wenge, maple and ash, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Set neck
Nut Width | 46mm
Fingerboard | Ebony
Frets | 24
Pickups | ACG RFB humbuckers, alnico bridge pickup, ceramic neck pickup with coil switching
Electronics | ACG DFM 4K active dual filter module
Controls | Volume/pickup pan (stacked), low pass filter frequency (neck pickup)/top cutoff (push/pull for low-mid boost) (stacked), low pass filter frequency (bridge pickup)/top cutoff (push/pull for pick attack) (stacked), sweepable mid/treble gain (stacked), coil tap selector switch
Hardware | Black hardware, ACG/Hipshot custom bridge, Gotoh GB350 machine heads
Weight | 4.3 kg
Case/gig bag included | Yes
Left-hand option available | Yes, as a custom order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Impressive craftsmanship; varied tonal palette
Minus | The control layout may be a little confusing
Overall | A fine instrument that does everything well

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

like it before! The seven-piece wenge, maple and ash asymmetric neck is finished in a satin lacquer, as is the body, and offers a well rounded, D-shaped neck profile that gives the player something substantial to work with. The 18mm string spacing at the bridge, 46mm nut width and broad, flat ebony fingerboard create a comfortable playing experience. As a five-string fretless, there is obviously a lot going on tonally: Alan has opted for a 34" scale, which makes the Salace a more comfortable instrument to play. Although the fingerboard is bare, pearl position markers have been used on the side facing, along with smaller guide dots between the larger markers.

The custom-designed ACG/Armstrong alnico and ceramic pickups and ACG/East dual filter circuitry are perfectly matched, and combine to give the player considerable scope for tailoring their sonic requirements. Refer to the spec table for a full list of what's on offer, but working on a filter-based system, and utilising four stacked controls with extra push/pull options and a coil-tap facility, the palette of sounds is impressive. A Neutrik locking jack socket, XLR output, low battery indicator, Gotoh tuners, derline nut and a custom ACG/Hipshot bridge complete the list of features.

Sounds And Playability

Tested with an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 amp and SL112 cabinets, the Salace stood out as soon as I plugged it in. With a strong, focused, forthright tone, the fretless nuances on offer were very prominent from the outset, and with the circuit set as flat as possible, the natural character of the bass became apparent. The mix of timbers worked well together, giving the bass a bit of everything in all departments, from full rounded low end, a tight sounding midrange and a clear and present top end.

Surprisingly, the low B string sounded a little restrained and flappy – but once I made some adjustments with the circuit and selected the low filter settings, there was considerably more 'oomph' when incorporating the low B into my playing. Playing with a pick or slapping certainly benefited from the pick attack option, giving the signal a better transient response when required. Panning between both pickups opened up some impressive tonal options which very effectively coloured the fretless tones, the bridge pickup in particular standing out very nicely when soloed. The neck pickup, when panned closer to it, created a full tone that seemed to work ideally in a supportive bass context.

Filter systems can take a little time to get used to: in my experience, it's best to think of each pickup as offering bass EQ (neck pickup) and treble EQ (bridge pickup). Once you've set the low filter frequency for each pickup, you can then make use of the mid-options and pan between the pickups until you hit the sweet spot you're looking for. With plenty of fretless 'mwah' on offer courtesy of the ebony fingerboard, the Salace will certainly benefit from some experimentation on the player's part.

Conclusion

It came as no surprise that a lot of visitors to the LBGS were seen trying out this bass, and with good reason. It has a good acoustic tonal character which shines through, and the technological guts within simply enhance the existing tones. As a fretless five-string, the bass offered excellent playability and was surprisingly comfortable to play – all good traits to have in our book. Pricey, yes, but definitely worth investigating.

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Dave Swift with his Phil Jones
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ELECTRO-HARMONIX
Battalion Bass Preamp/DI

EHX's latest full-featured preamp comes with all the bells, and indeed, all the whistles. Joel McIver prepares to stomp

Electro-Harmonix
www.ehx.com

£136

There are so many bass preamp pedals of varying cost and usefulness currently on the planet that occasionally we wake at night from a nightmare in which we are drowning under a tsunami of small metal boxes, each of which has several buttons marked Bypass and Gain on it. We must lay off the crackers and Stilton at bedtime. Still, the upside is that at least we're likely to be paying attention when yet another preamp lands on the doormat at *BGM*'s secret command bunker – and one such gizmo of more than average quality has done just that, courtesy of the fragrant marketing people at Electro-Harmonix.

Counting the controls, adding the number of ins/outs and hefting the solid weight of the Battalion, a pedal with a heavy metal name if ever we heard one, it's apparent that you're getting a whole lot of functionality for your 136 quid. Essentially designed as two EQ and distortion stages, the pedal offers different effects flows – in other words, whether you want your EQ-ed signal overdriven, or should the EQ affect the signal when it's already been overdriven? Only you can decide that, but I love the choice of options and the very real difference in sound and the feel of the notes 'opening' that each gives you. The Dry EQ option means that only the dry portion of your blended tones – one EQ-ed, one not – is distorted. Clever stuff.

The EQ is familiar – Bass (below 200Hz), Lo Mid (boost/cut at 280Hz), Hi Mid (boost/cut at 750Hz) and Treble (boost/cut above 2kHz). You can go pretty much anywhere, and pay half as much, for that. However, if you're looking for reasons to buy, I'd say the fact that the Battalion comes with unusually sophisticated distortion shaping – Level, Blend, Drive and Tone controls plus a dedicated footswitch – is attractive. There's also a pushbutton-operated

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Excellent tone range and spec
Minus | Nothing that you wouldn't expect at this price point
Overall | Outstanding bang for your buck, especially the BME

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

compressor with its own purdy LED, and – astoundingly at this price point – a noise gate, which allows you to reduce between-note noise and which I haven't seen on a unit of this type. XLR, headphone and ¼" outputs round off a pretty impressive package.

SEVER INNOVATIONS
Tone Up Bass Bridge

Davorin Sever has 30 years of experience, three of which were spent developing this beauty. Kev Sanders takes it to the bridge

Tonetech
www.tonetech.co.uk

£170

Leo Fender's earliest basses had bridges that consisted of little more than a piece of bent metal with two movable saddles. The first and only improvement he made was to give each string its own separate saddle, adjustable for height and intonation. That's the standard Fender bass bridge we all know and love. It worked well in the 50s and it still works well today: it's cheap to make and cheap to buy. So why fix something that ain't broke? Simply because it can be improved upon.

The first company to realise this was Hipshot, who started producing the chunky Badass bridge as a straight swap for the Fender units as far back as the mid 70s. Now, the Slovenian company Sever Innovations has taken the basic design and made substantial improvements.

The headline is that the 1.5mm-thick base plate is made from stainless steel, as are the individual bridge saddles and adjustment screws. That's good; it'll never tarnish or rust, which is important for a unit that's constantly mauled by hot sweaty hands. The standard of engineering and machining is very high. My only slight criticism is that the tiny knurled string saddles which allow string spacing to be accurately adjusted are a little loose on their threads – although this is something that doesn't affect the sound or their function. The quick-change string anchoring is a useful feature, and a very slight concave curve to the base plate means that as it's screwed down to the front of the bass, the whole bridge is pulled under tension against the body of the instrument.

UK distributors Tonetech sent me a Precision-style bass with one of the bridges fitted for assessment. Through my usual rig the sound was bright and solid, with a real bell-like clarity and sustain. It's impossible to unpick exactly how much of this is due solely to the bridge, of course, but what I can say is that it works flawlessly, string changes are a doddle and it looks very classy.

So is it worth 170 quid? Well, there's no doubt that it offers big improvements over a generic chromed steel bridge. However, companies like Schaller are also making exquisitely engineered bridges for less, and Hipshot do a tasty vintage Fender-style bridge in stainless steel for about half of the price of the Tone Up.

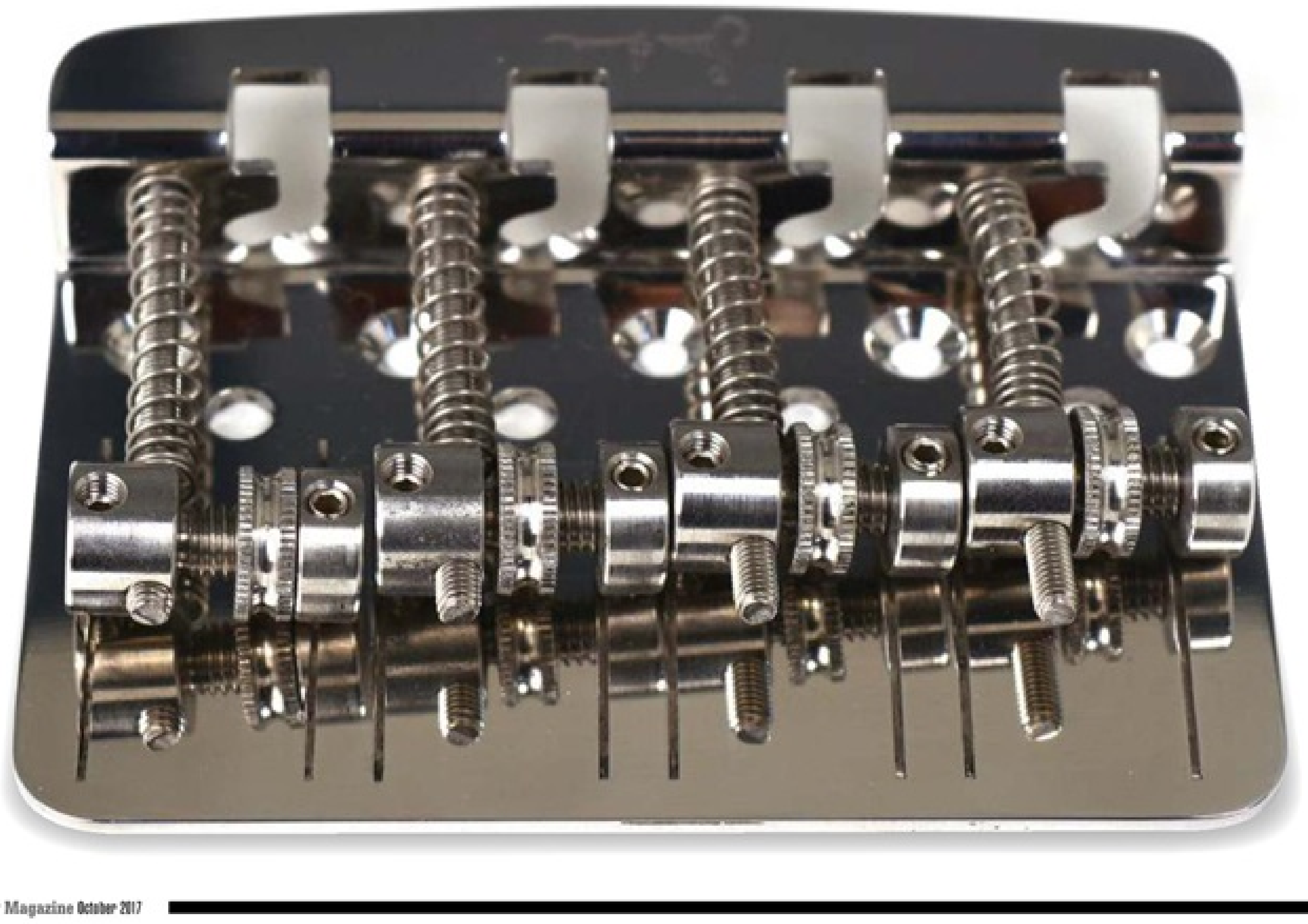
Price isn't everything, of course, and the Tone Up is made of top quality materials and has a precision-engineered feel for which you'd expect to pay top dollar. If I were buying a big-ticket custom-made bass, this is the kind of bridge I'd want to see fitted on it.

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Precision made from stainless steel
Minus | Expensive
Overall | You get what you pay for – in this case a beautifully engineered, stainless steel bridge with innovative features

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	9/10
SOUND QUALITY	9/10
VALUE	6/10



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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across 17 years of touring, and 42 solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners | 74

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in almost every conceivable musical situation – function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for BGM since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for legendary bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Intermediate | 78

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Philip Mann studied at Basstech, completing the London College of Music's bachelor's degree programme, secured a master's degree in performance and receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. He then established himself as a busy electric and double bassist. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he has appeared in London's West End and across Europe on many productions. His performance and session credits include recording at the legendary Sun Studios in Memphis, and working with Greek fusion guitarist Tolis Zavaliaris and the Big Band Metheny ensemble. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year from 2012. Currently, he is a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School of Music and lectures for Scott's Bass Lessons.

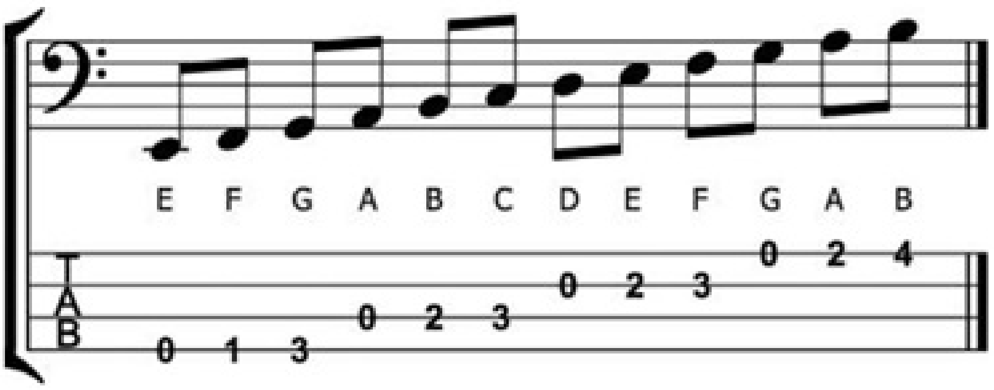
PHIL MANN

Advanced | 84

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

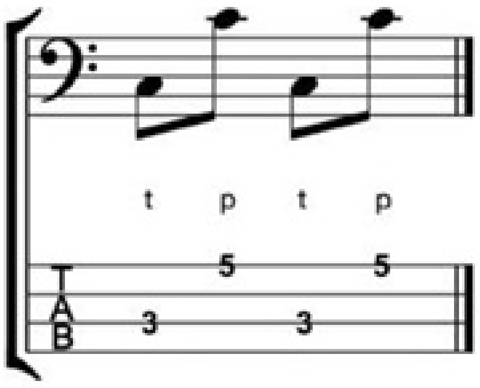
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.



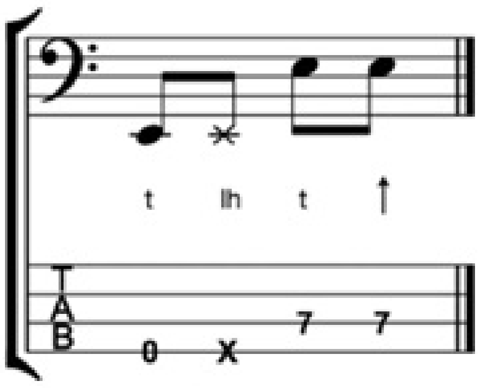
Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

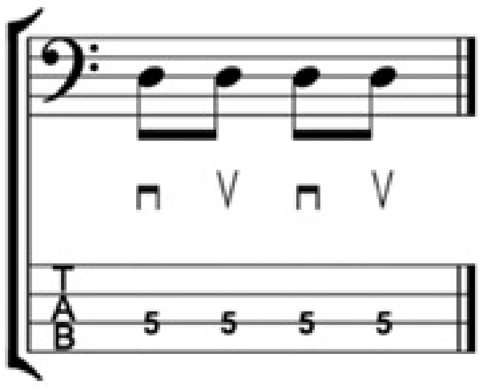
PLAYING TECHNIQUES



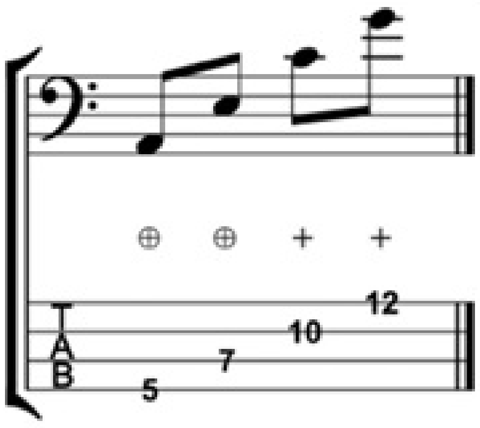
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE
Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE
Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow

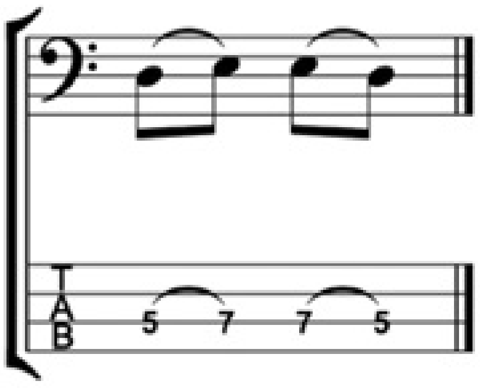


PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)

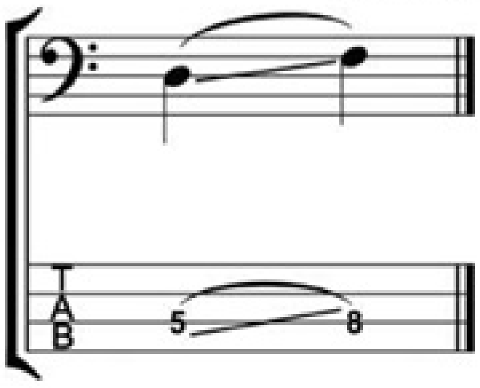


TAPPING TECHNIQUES
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

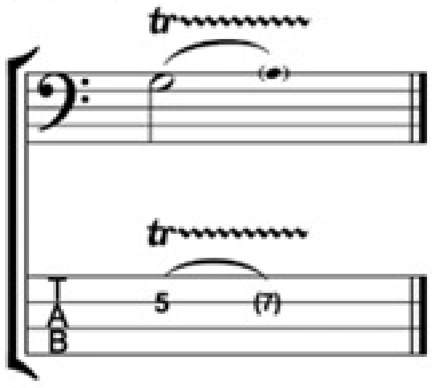
FRETTING TECHNIQUES



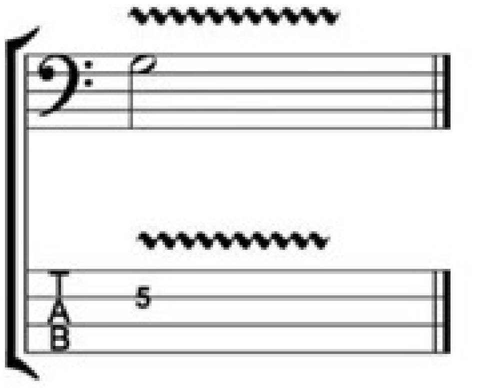
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF
Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



SLIDE (GLISSANDO)
Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note

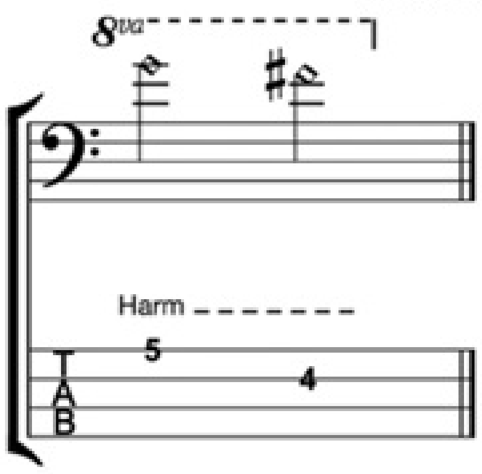


TRILLS
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs

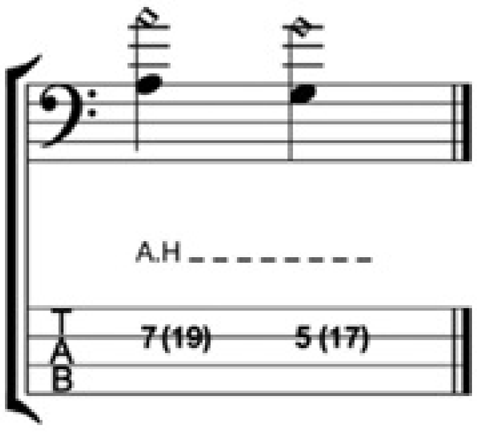


VIBRATO
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS

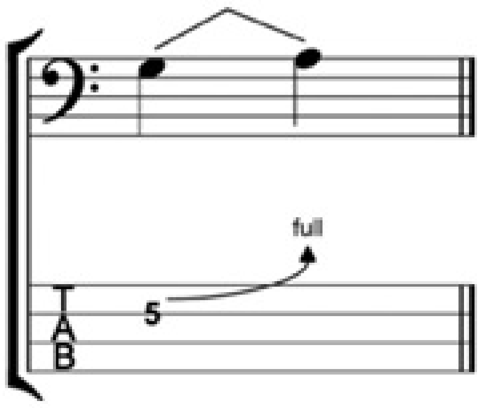


NATURAL HARMONICS
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated

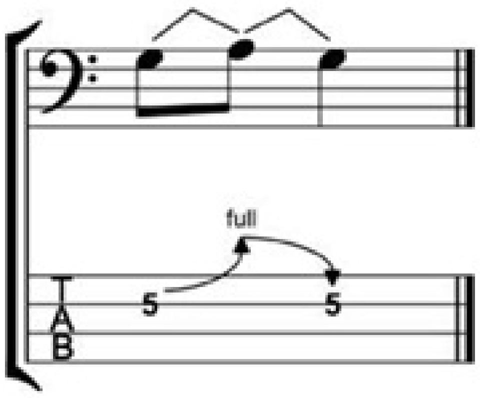


ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND
The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE
The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Take your seats for Professor Goller

I've done quite a lot of teaching recently, and it often amazes me how many bassists can play well even though they're missing some basic knowledge of their instrument. This manifests itself in people being able to play really fast and learn intricate lines, while experiencing major problems in finding basic shapes or even certain notes on their fretboard. Of course, having more knowledge in this way doesn't mean you're necessarily a better musician, but I believe that learning as much as possible is the way forward because every bit of information helps you to grow into a better player with more musical choices. On both electric and double bass, it helps to know where everything is on your fretboard, and whether you can hear notes and lines in your head before you actually play them. Learning every shape, arpeggio and interval in as many different ways possible is useful, as does singing notes before and while you play them: this trains you to truly play what you imagine. An exercise for this would be to start an arpeggio with a specific finger and then repeat it, using different fingers to start with. This way you'll play the same thing in different ways, meaning that in every musical situation, regardless where you're coming from or where you're going, you'll be able to play this arpeggio. The same principle applies with practising scales. Playing them over two octaves is a great way to get to know your fretboard, by shifting to different strings. A tip for beginners who have never done this before is to keep a few familiar intervals such as thirds and fifths always present – and don't forget to sing along!

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

MIKE POGGIONE

Monstrosity bassist Mike considers the role of the picking hand

Welcome back! A lot of people ask me where I prefer to rest my thumb and body of my picking hand in regards to having it positioned on a pickup, the top string or even the middle portion of the strings. Where you decide to leave your thumb or entire hand as a pivot point is up to you. Usually, I leave my thumb anchored on the pickup in order to play the third to sixth strings of my bass,

but when I go to higher-pitched strings, I will anchor my thumb on the fourth string. This will allow me to clearly attack the first through the third strings of my bass. Each bassist will have his or her own preferred sweet spot, which I consider the anchor point of the picking hand, whether it be on the pickup, the body of the bass or the strings of the bass itself. Every bass player has their own individual style and techniques, as we know: in my opinion, a range of plucking techniques and playing positions, such as the ones we've been discussing over the last couple of issues, should be practised until they're second nature. Try to utilise different approaches appropriately, depending on your musical needs and capabilities. The more you practise these techniques the easier they will become, which will allow you to increase your speed and endurance with all types of music, not just the extreme metal genre in which I specialise. There is no reason to have bad technique, so focus on various playing styles and see which work best for you. Begin slowly and build up to an appropriate speed, always maintaining clarity!

www.monstrosity.us

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Active or passive? Therapy? bassist Mike makes a decision

Well folks, after much deliberation and quite a bit of experimentation I've now decided to solely use passive basses for live work. No big deal, a lot of you are probably saying, but for someone who has played active basses for 30-plus years, I feel like this a bold step for me. So why the big change now, you ask? To be honest, I've always tried to simplify and refine my live setup to the point where it's rock solid with regard to reliability, sound and durability. Touring as much as we do, that consistency is incredibly important – and with active basses I've found the reliance on a battery and the extra onboard electronics to be a bit of a liability. They drain the batteries faster than I can remember to replace them, plus the wiring can be prone to corrosion and 'sweating out' especially after a few hot shows in a row. Also, a couple of my active basses didn't play too nicely with certain pedals – in particular a couple of overdrives, which resulted in muddy tones and a dip in clarity. I've kept my regular, much loved and played guitars and simply replaced the active pickups with passive ones. Nothing fancy pickup-wise – simple Precision-style humbuckers were the only ones I considered. There's something about that purity of tone and the warm punch which seems very attractive when connected to my preamps, pedals and other signal suckers. There also seems to be a clearer sense of dynamics: I'm now more aware that the harder I pick, the louder and crunchier the output becomes. Never say never: I have, of course, kept all my old pickups and the majority of the wiring intact, in case I feel the need to do a bit of reverse engineering or if I want to restore them to factory settings. In general, I do prefer the hotter output and more detailed tone-sculpting options of the active guitars, so I doubt I'll become an evangelistic supporter of passive basses – but for live use, they do hit the spot. Of course, recording sessions will be a different situation altogether: I'll be using the best-sounding bass for the project, whether passive or active. So here's to keeping it simple, and hopefully never again having to wrangle a nine-volt battery into a bass five minutes before show time!

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Unplug and get into the zone, urges 10-string warrior McKinsey

Getting back to basics and developing your ability to practise without an amp, now that you've had some time to simply focus on the quality of the notes, I'd like you to work on groove. Not long ago I made the analogy that if the instrumentalists in a performance can be equated with parts of the body, bassists should be the musculature. We need to be the ones that make things move. When you're playing an extended range instrument without the benefit of your electronics, what are you feeling? Are you that muscle? Making things groove becomes a very different thing when you take away the sonic force of your speakers. Now you need to feel in your hands and your body what is normally coming through the rig. Take apart all those elements and really focus on each. The duration of each note, how it falls against the beat, and how much you imply versus how much you state explicitly, are now front and center. Can you make the music happen by only playing a melody? Does your chordal work make your head nod?
In this stripped-down context, elements of what you do technically become blaringly obvious. At first that may feel awkward and even unpleasant, but you need to make this strangeness comfortable. You need to make time regularly to do this and revisit your playing under this microscope. Stripped of the big sound, you can address things with clarity and a little objectivity. Without drums or a looper, how do you make things groove? Can you do this convincingly with only traditional bass playing? If you find you're falling back on what you know works, start working on the things that don't feel as solid. If you need two-handed tapping to get things happening, shy away from that. If slap feels wonderful, don't do it. When you can make the music work in one portion of your fingerboard, make that translate across the entire neck. This is imperative. This kind of devotion to what you do will improve what you do live, certainly, but it will improve what you do in a studio or recording situation immeasurably. You may also find it opens you a bit as a songwriter, since you are literally hearing and feeling the instrument differently. Enjoy the quiet – because next month we plug back in and get noisy once more.

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

MY
HOUSE WORK
IS TO ROCK
THE HOUSE.
THE POWER
OF MUSIC!
thomann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Starting out on bass? You're in good hands with the great Steve Lawson. Let the journey continue!

Let's dig a little deeper into bass-lines that use chord shapes, shall we? I hope you had fun with the double stops last month. We'll return to playing two- and three-note chords in a future column, but this month we're going back to playing lines built on arpeggios, one note at a time.

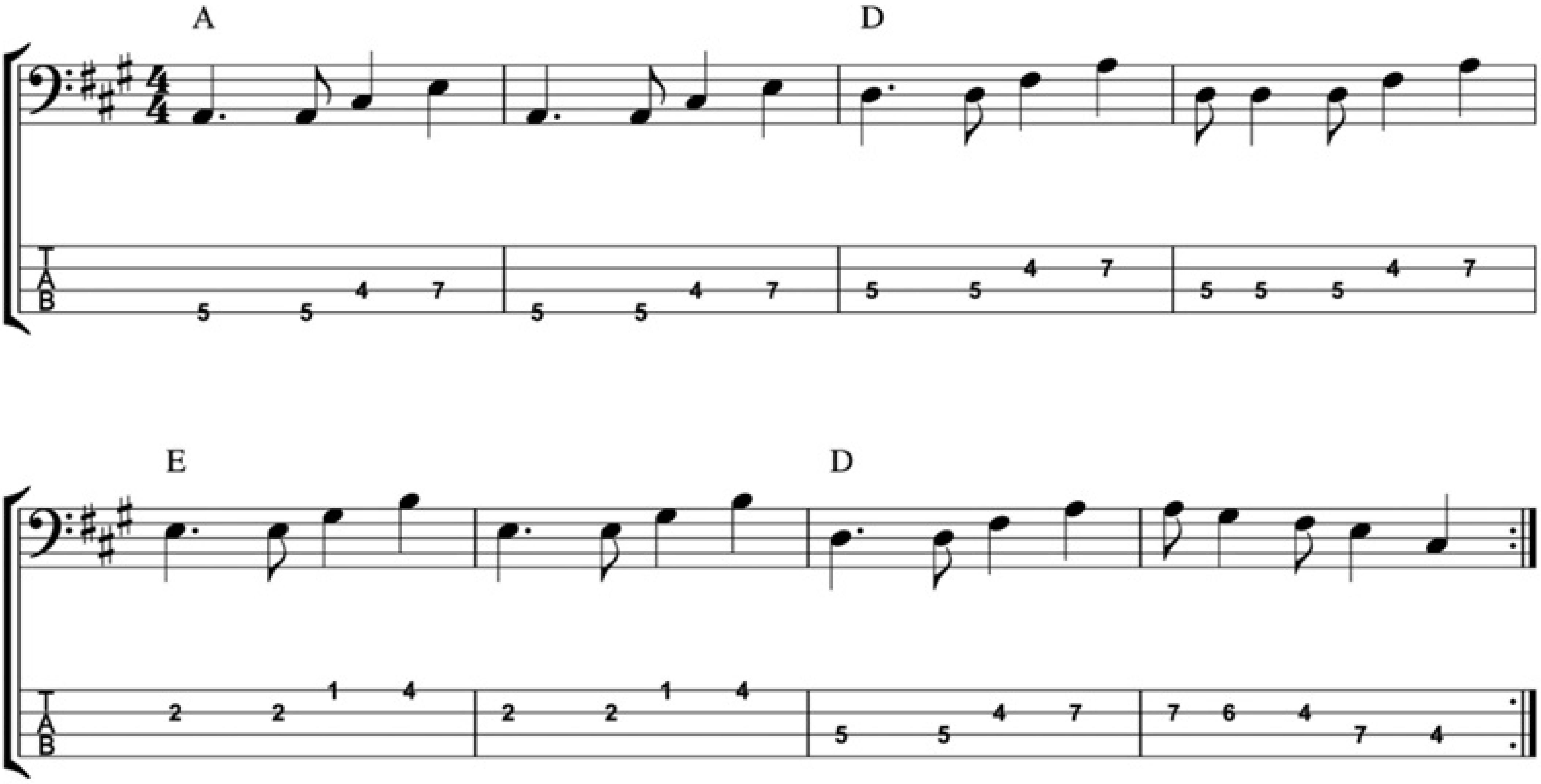
When we last looked at walking lines and arpeggios, we played through all the triads (three note chords) in the key of G. They gave us this sequence of chords in the key: G major, A minor, B minor, C major, D major, E minor and F# minor b5. (A quick note about that last chord: you'll sometimes see it called F# diminished – or if it has a 7th in it too, F# half diminished. The reason I avoid those terms is that diminished chords have a totally different function in terms of how we put chords together. More of that another time!)

Let's have a look at the three major chords in there, G, C and D. So much music has been made with just those three: they're the foundation of the blues, and a lot of other styles too – country, reggae, calypso, punk…

In terms of our chord sequence in the major key outlined above, they are the first, fourth and fifth chords in any key. We often write chords out in terms of their position in the key as Roman numerals – so in this case, I, IV, V. As for the naming convention, major chords are written as upper case Roman numerals, and minor chords in lower case (ii, iii, vi, vii).

Here's an example using the chords I, IV and V in the key of A major with a soca/calypso-influenced bass-line:

EXAMPLE 1



> "SO MUCH MUSIC HAS BEEN MADE WITH JUST THREE CHORDS: THEY'RE THE FOUNDATION OF THE BLUES, AND AN AWFUL LOT OF OTHER STYLES TOO"

For the G, G# and B over the E major chord, use fingers 3, 4 and 1, in that order

There are some things to note here. The time signature, that C with a line through it, means 'cut common time'. It's counted as 2/2, so it's actually twice as fast as you might assume. The tempo marking would be for a minim, or half note, so if you're tapping your foot, you only need to tap it on beats one and three. Start slow, but have a listen to some soca music on Youtube to get an idea where this feel is heading.

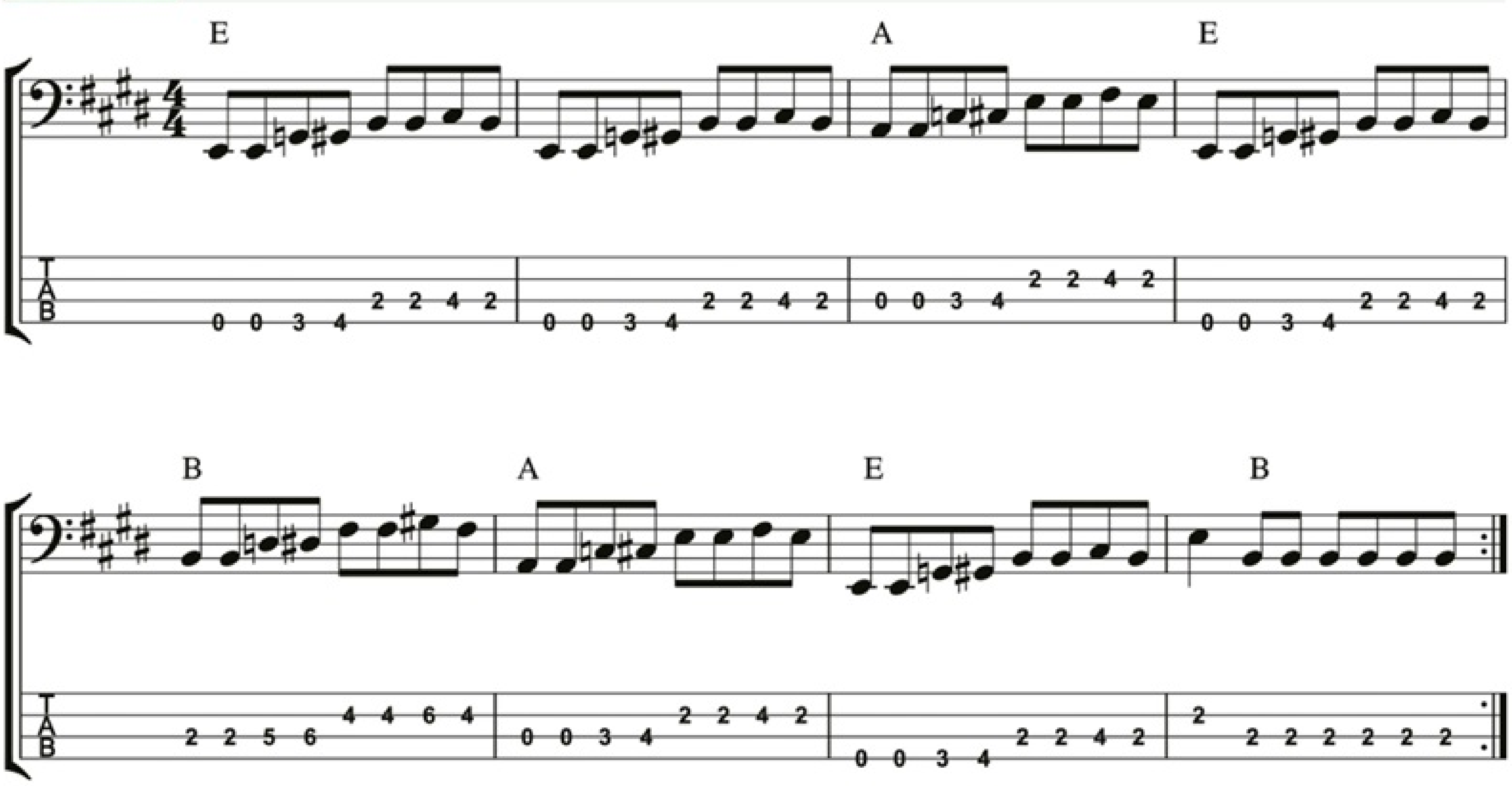
Also, note the way the last bar is over a D chord (the IV chord in A major) but has no D in it at all! Here we're back to the lesson we established in the last walking bass conversation – that the direction of a line, where it points to, is often as important as the specific notes in it. The notes here are all from the key, so it's not as if we're implying a change in the harmonic context. We've just allowed the line to run from the fifth of the chord we're on down the scale, and then point us melodically back to the root for the start of the second repeat.

Note that the way that complexity happens in any particular line is often focused on one area. Here, the chords and the notes in the bass-line are pretty simple, with the last bar being a little trickier. The two things that will trip us up are the tempo (it's pretty fast) and the feel. Getting a line like this to bounce along is way more important than adding more notes and making it more complicated. If you're used to playing funk, or slower, laid-back rock styles, playing a line that sits this high up on the beat may take a while to master.

So the rule is, never mistake adding more notes to a line for progress. Often, the progress we need to reach is a deeper understanding of the style of music we're playing, and a deeper commitment to getting the feel right – *not* a journey towards adding more and more notes. That's a classic mistake to make. Focus on authenticity and subtle things like the characteristic bass-lines in the style, and the specifics of the groove/feel, rather than increased complexity as a measure of progress.

Let's look at another I, IV, V progression, this time in a 50s rock'n'roll feel. Here we're starting to add in notes from outside the basic chord notes...

EXAMPLE 2



© Eckie

So what's going on here? Well firstly, we've got both the major and the minor third in the line. We can see from the score that something's happening outside of the key we're in by the presence of what are called accidentals – notes that aren't in the written key of the music.

The key signature at the start of any piece of music tells us which key it's in, and therefore which notes are either sharps or flats for the entire piece. Whenever a note appears that is outside of that, the symbol for flat or sharp needs to be added. Here, we've got a G natural before the expected G# in the E major chord. So the G has a natural sign next to it, and the G# has a sharp sign next to it so we know that it's different from the note before it. Sounds confusing, right? Take it slow.

Though there is a logic to this that gets easier with time, it's always worth being aware of the kind of assumptions that western music notation makes about what music 'should' be. Anything that's outside of the written key looks like it's making the music more complex or difficult. In reality, blues-based musics rely on a different set of conventions that don't map particularly well to standard notation, and as such you probably want to get away from the score as quickly as possible and start relying on your ears, like every great blues musician in the history of the world has done. Reading music isn't the be-all and end-all of learning music, and for many musical paths, it's actually a pretty shabby way of trying to

To avoid over-stretching, slide your little finger up to the D# over the B major chord

"ROCK'N'ROLL IS, IN THE MAIN, NOT A SPACE FOR MASSIVELY PROGRESSIVE THINKING: THE FOCUS OF ROCK'N'ROLL BASS PLAYING IS AUTHENTICITY, NOT REINVENTION"

communicate the things that matter within the music.

Back to the line in hand: the other chord note we've got here is the sixth – the second half of the line rocks between the fifth and the sixth in the scale. This is a very common note in blues, rock'n'roll and R&B lines. It's an important one to get familiar with, as it'll give you a good place to start should you be trying to write a line in that style.

Rock'n'roll is, in the main, not a space for massively progressive thinking: the focus of rock'n'roll bass playing is authenticity, not reinvention. Here we have a number of rock'n'roll archetypes: the constant quavers/eighth notes make it really easy to read the rhythm, and give the line a driving feel. The complexity here is in handling a line that moves in slightly unfamiliar ways, and the questions associated with moving a line up and down the neck when the key means we have to use open strings for some of the chords, but not others.

Pay particular attention to the line against the B chord. Here we don't have an open string to help with the pattern, so there's a slightly bigger stretch, and possibly a slide on the A string between the D and the D#. Experiment with different ways of playing the line and see which works best for you. But notice that we've basically got one bar of musical material here, and a fill at the end. Loads of blues-based music works like this, with a riff that follows the chords, and a turn-around at the end that brings us back to the beginning. Learning to recognise that is at least as important as being able to play any particular blues or rock'n'roll line.

For a record with a similar bass part (albeit one that sits between a shuffle and a straight feel) try 'Good Golly Miss Molly' by Little Richard. Note that most, if not all, of what you're hearing in the bass is Little Richard's left hand on the piano... sometimes the best bass for the job isn't a bass! There's a lot we can learn about feel and groove from the left hand of a great piano player, and a lot we can learn to avoid from the left hand of a mediocre one.

Until next month, practise these lines, and do some focused listening to other tracks in these styles. Try and discern by ear the conventions in the style in terms of groove, repetition, sound and arrangement – and enjoy it!

Intermediate Tutorial

STUART CLAYTON

Take a step up on your journey to bass mastery with Commander Clayton's unmissable mid-level tuition

Welcome to Part 3 in my new series on learning to play with a plectrum. In this column, we're working through the mechanics of the technique from the very beginning, so if you haven't read the first two instalments, I'd advise doing so before continuing.

In the last issue we began playing lines using the alternate picking technique, which requires us to be able to cross or skip strings while maintaining a continuous down-up wrist movement. This means that we were often playing a downstroke on one string, then the upstroke on a different string. Although this might seem complex, it's easier to do than it sounds – and if you've spent the last month working through the exercises from that column, you should be well-placed to start work on this one.

Because of the way in which we have approached learning the plectrum technique so far, there have been no exercises that involve any syncopation: every phrase of every line has begun with a strong downbeat and has therefore been played with a downstroke. Of course, most real-world bass-lines incorporate syncopation in some way, whether they begin on an upbeat, or include parts that begin on upbeats. Let's look at an example of this.

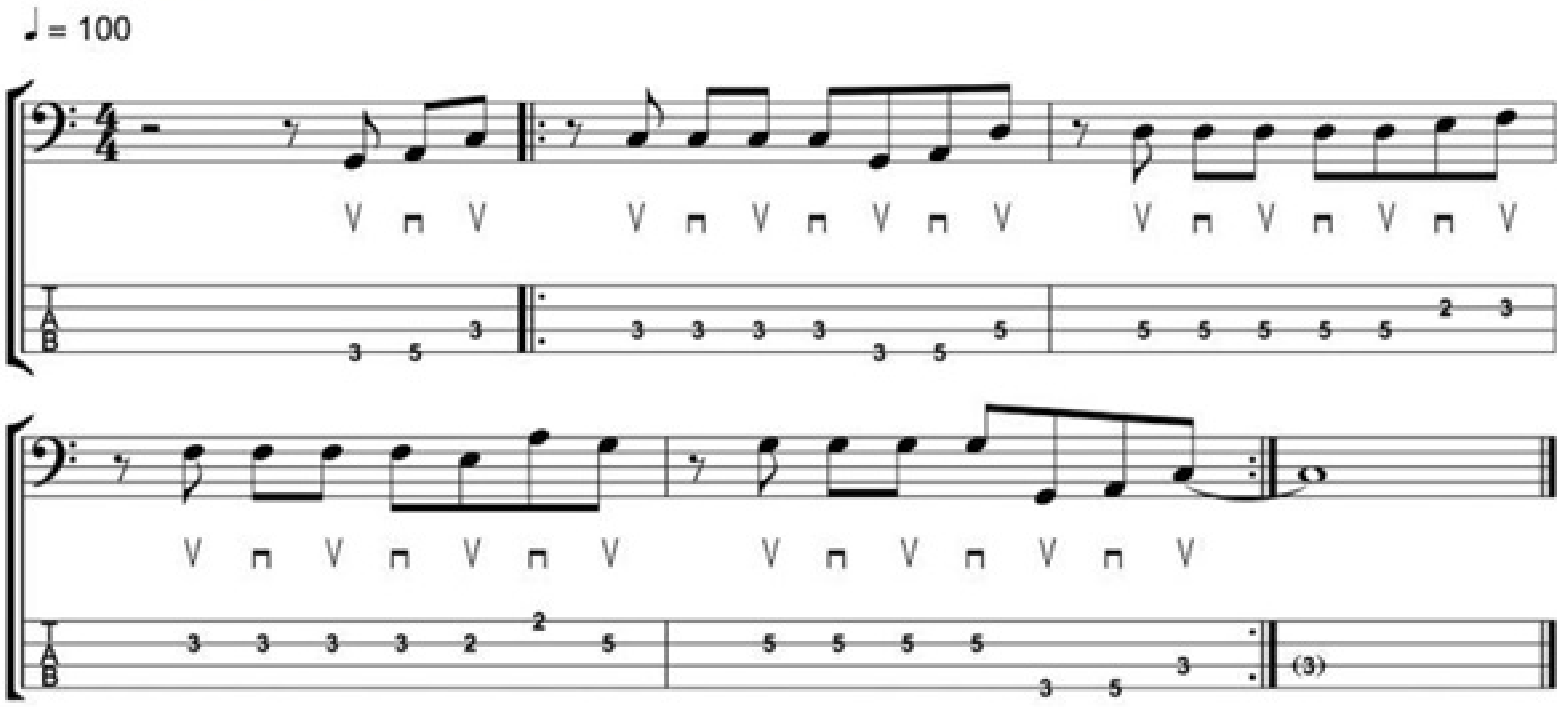
Example 1

This bass-line begins on the upbeat of the third beat, meaning that if we follow the logic employed so far, the first note that is played should be performed as an upstroke. You can see that the same is true of each of the bars that follow: each time around the bass is silent on the downbeat of beat one, but plays on the offbeat.

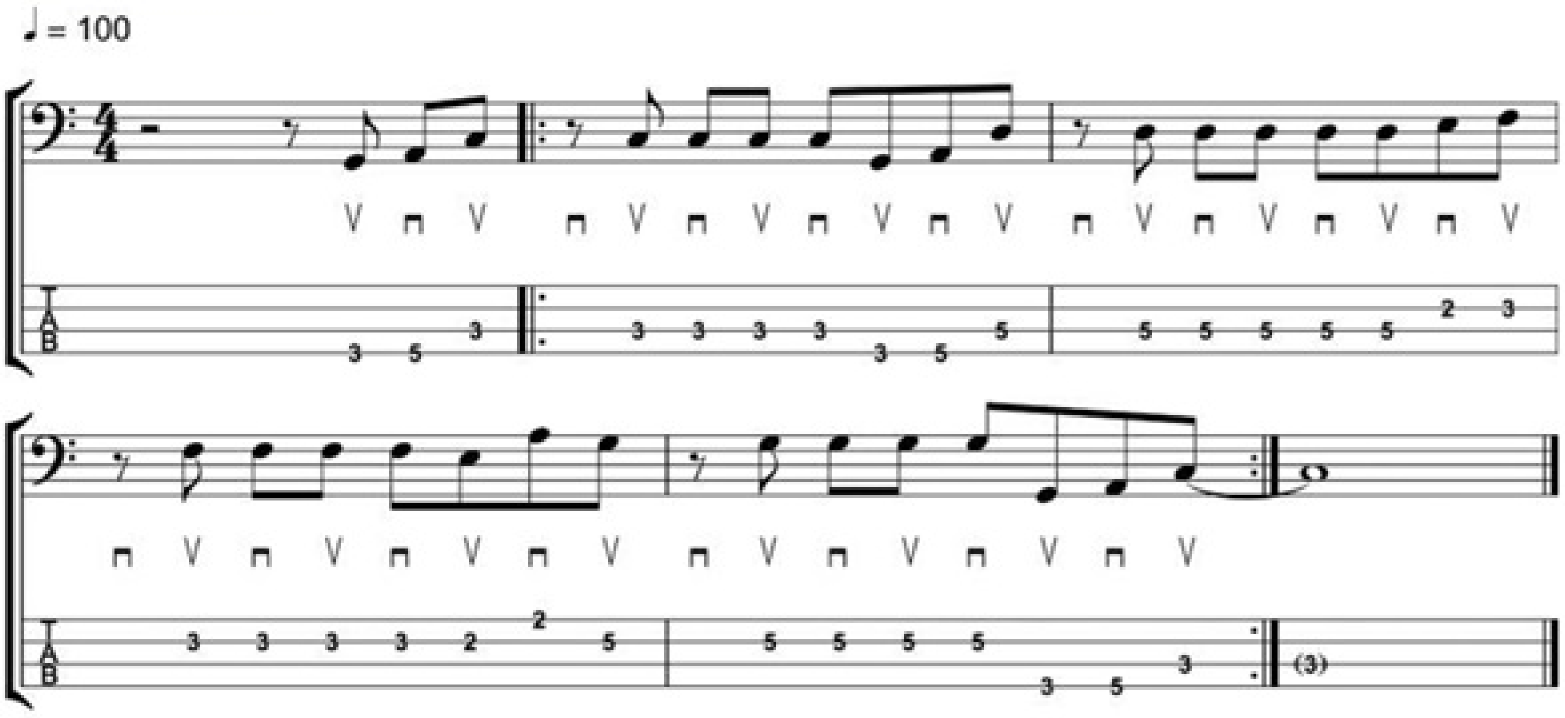
You might be forgiven for thinking that in situations such as these, the best thing would instead be to start each phrase with a downstroke. This temptation must be avoided! If you were to begin phrases such as these with downstrokes, your picking motion would be running contrary to the beat, and you would wind up playing upstrokes for downbeats, which would be uncomfortable. Depending on the complexity of the bass-line you are playing, this would also be likely to create picking problems within a bar or two.

The solution is simple: we continue employing the logic used so far and play all upbeat notes with upstrokes. This will require you to play a silent downstroke on the beat. This is where your arm goes through

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



the motion of a downstroke, but without actually playing the string. Your wrist will then be able to play the upbeat note with an upstroke as required, ready to begin the next beat with a strong downstroke.

Example 2

Here's the same line again, but this time 'silent downstrokes' have been faintly indicated where necessary.

The good news is that despite the long-winded explanation, the concept of playing 'silent downstrokes' is actually very logical and would likely suggest itself to most bassists naturally. However, if you're new to using a plectrum, it's being conscious of the concept in the early stages of your practice, in order to avoid slipping into any bad habits. If you find yourself struggling to play silent downstrokes, try playing a quiet ghost in place of the rest instead – this will help you to maintain the correct picking sequence, and you can gradually phase them out as you become comfortable with the concept.

Let's now look at some exercises which put this concept into practice.

Example 3

This exercise uses a simple rhythm that mixes downbeat and upbeat rhythms.

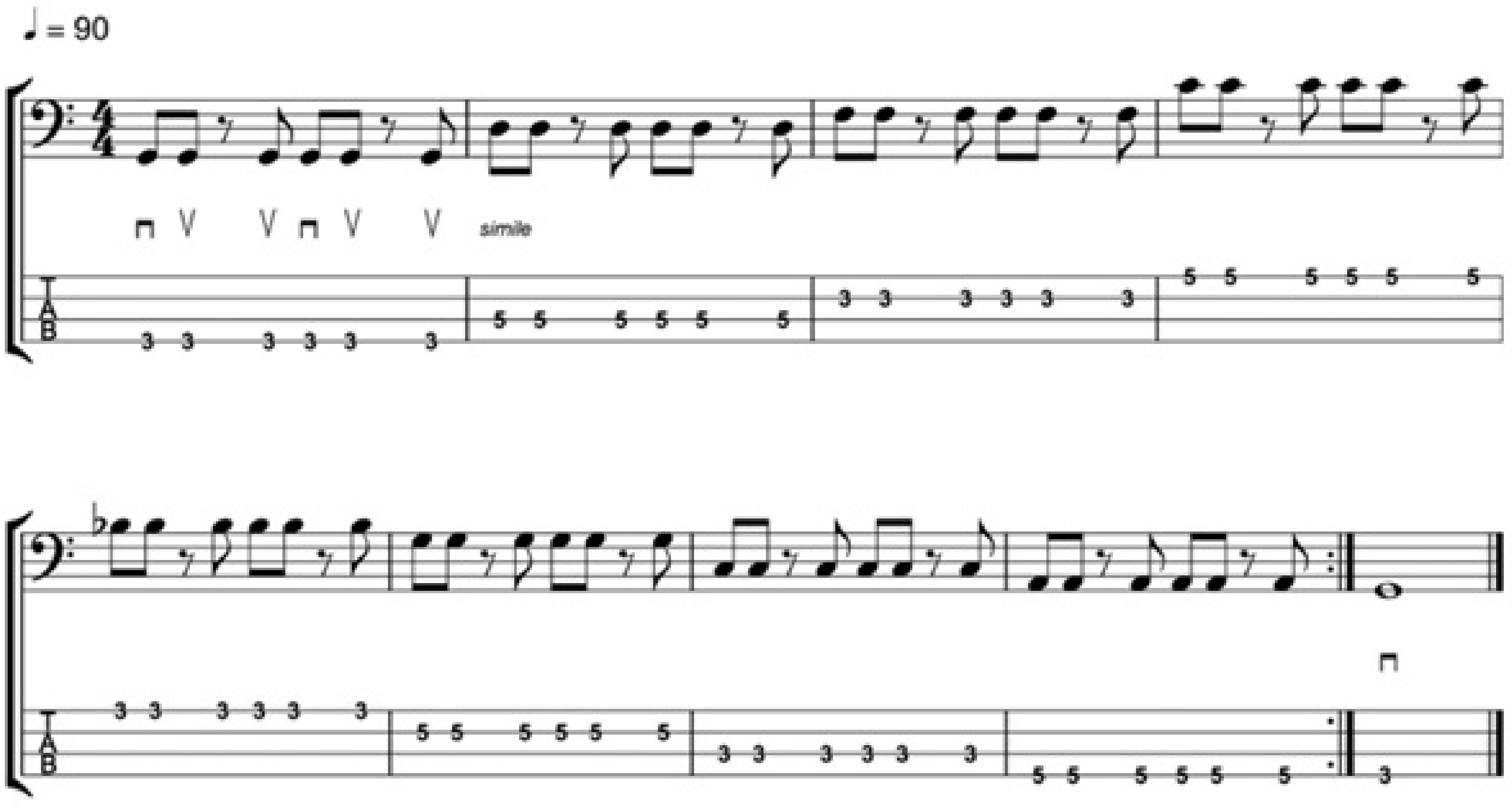
Example 4

Here's a simple rock bassline that will help you to get comfortable with this technique.

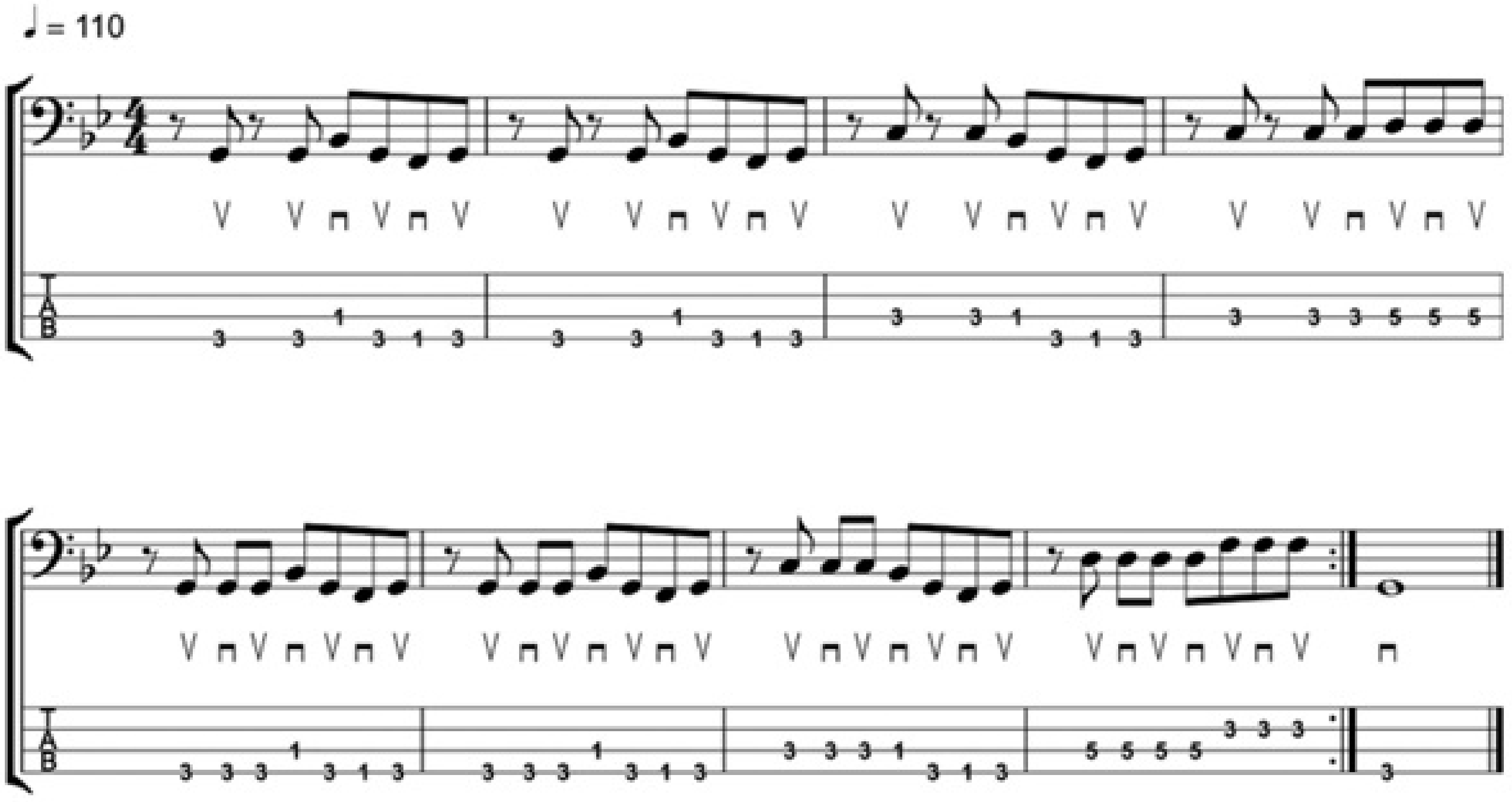
Example 5

This exercise contains some tied notes. For example, the third note played in the second bar falls on the upbeat of beat two and should therefore be played with an upstroke. This note is then tied to the quaver that falls on beat three, so you must leave it ringing. The next note that is played falls on the upbeat of beat three and should also be played with an upstroke, as shown in the picking guide. In between these upstrokes, your picking hand will need to play a silent downstroke, in order for the correct sequence to continue.

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



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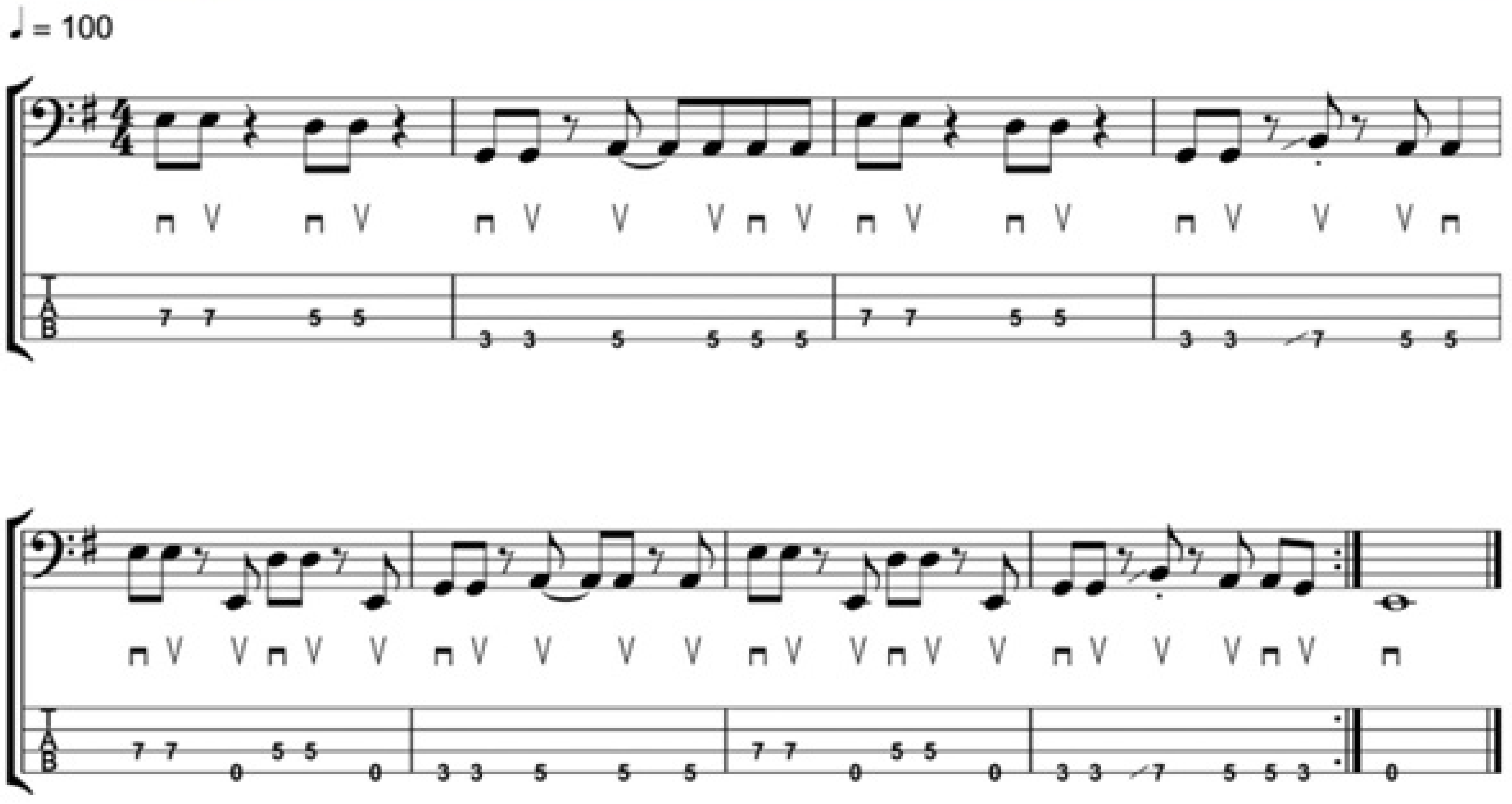


Example 6

This exercise is a rock bass-line that, as you can see, features some more tied notes.

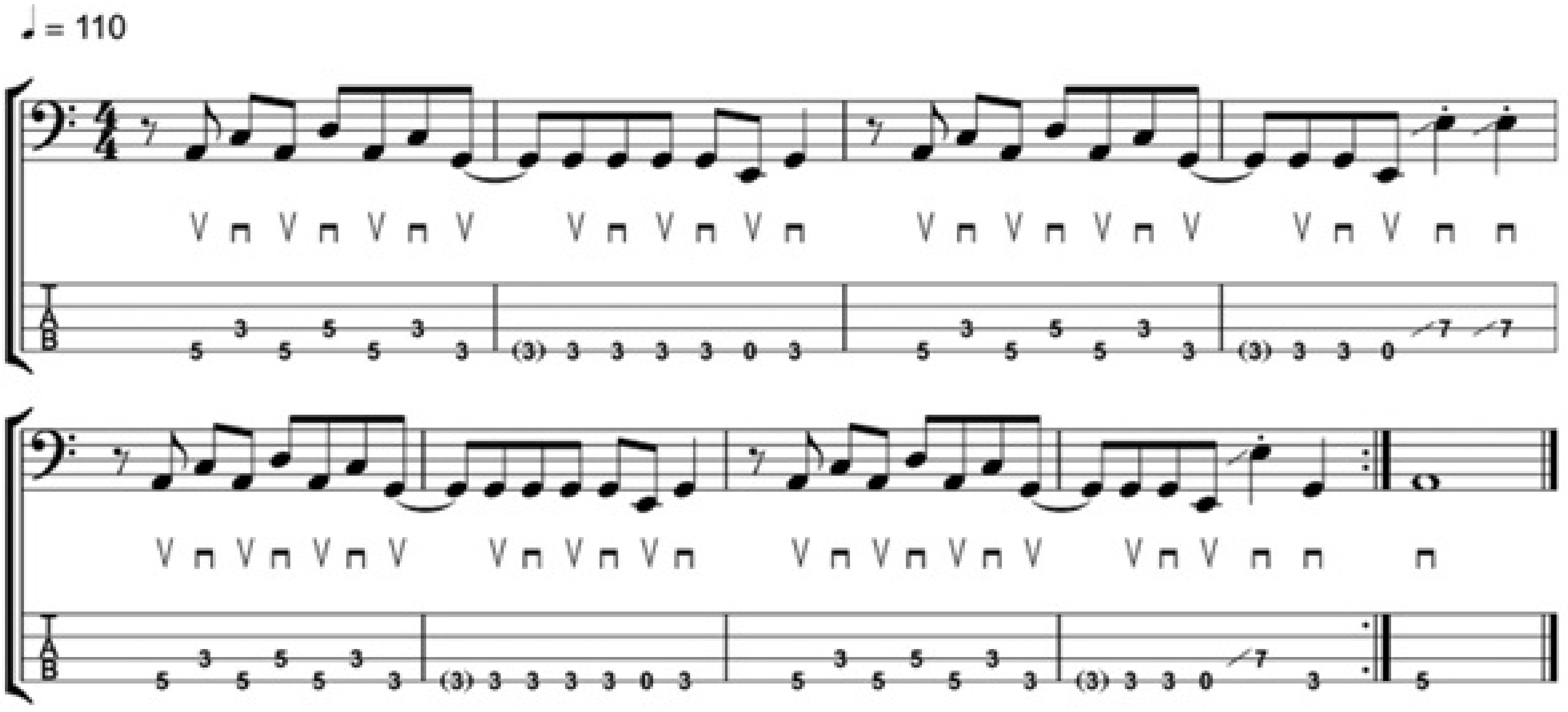
Example 7

This features an anacrusis before the first bar. This is a short phrase that begins the line and is an incomplete bar. In this instance the anacrusis is three quavers, and would therefore begin on the upbeat of the third beat. This means that the phrase is played starting on an upstroke. This idea is reused at multiple points throughout the line and in addition to this, there are many further parts that begin on an upbeat. As you play the silent downstrokes required before these upbeats, remember to keep your wrist nice and relaxed, as normal.

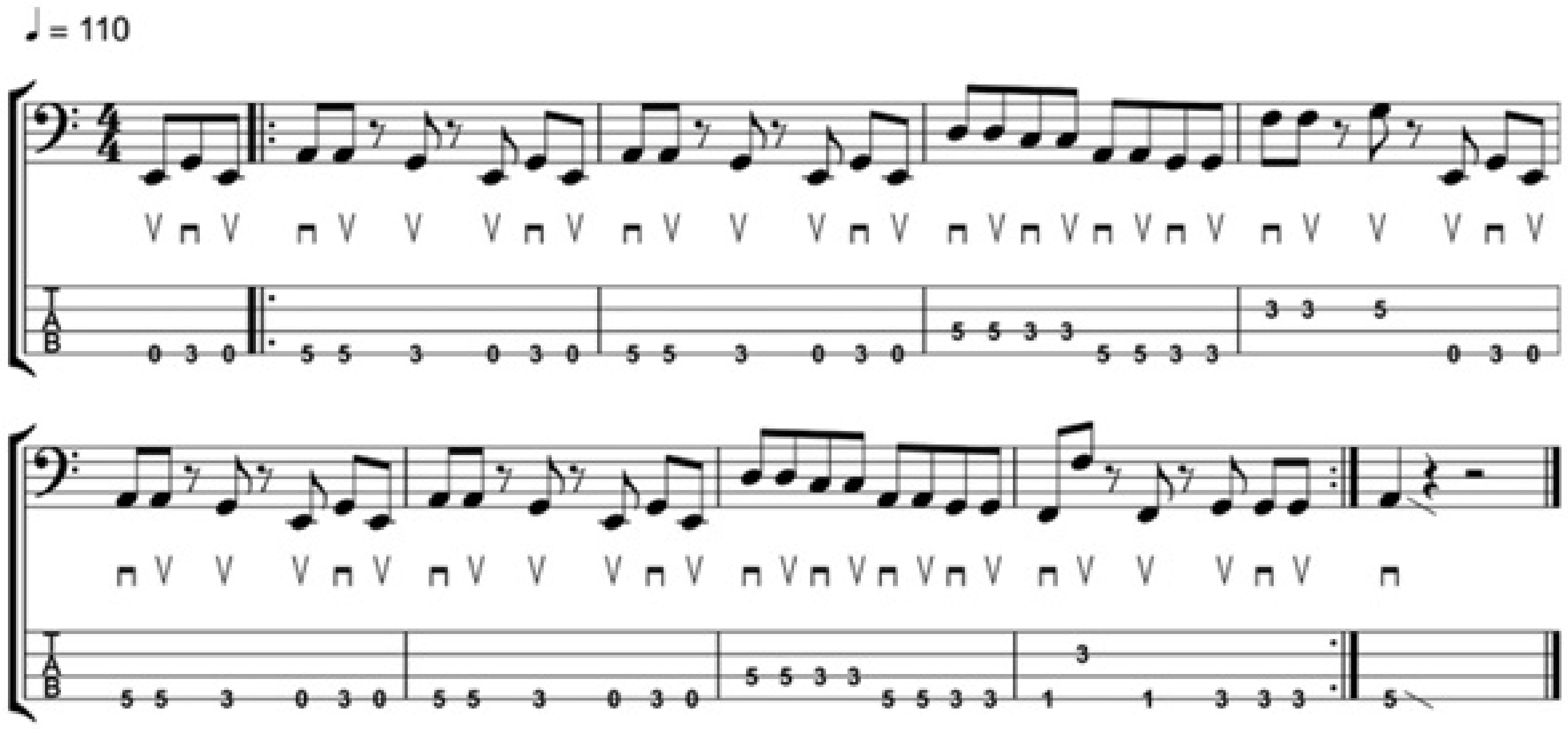
Example 8

This exercise is a little more challenging as there is a fair amount of string crossing to contend with, along with several tied notes.

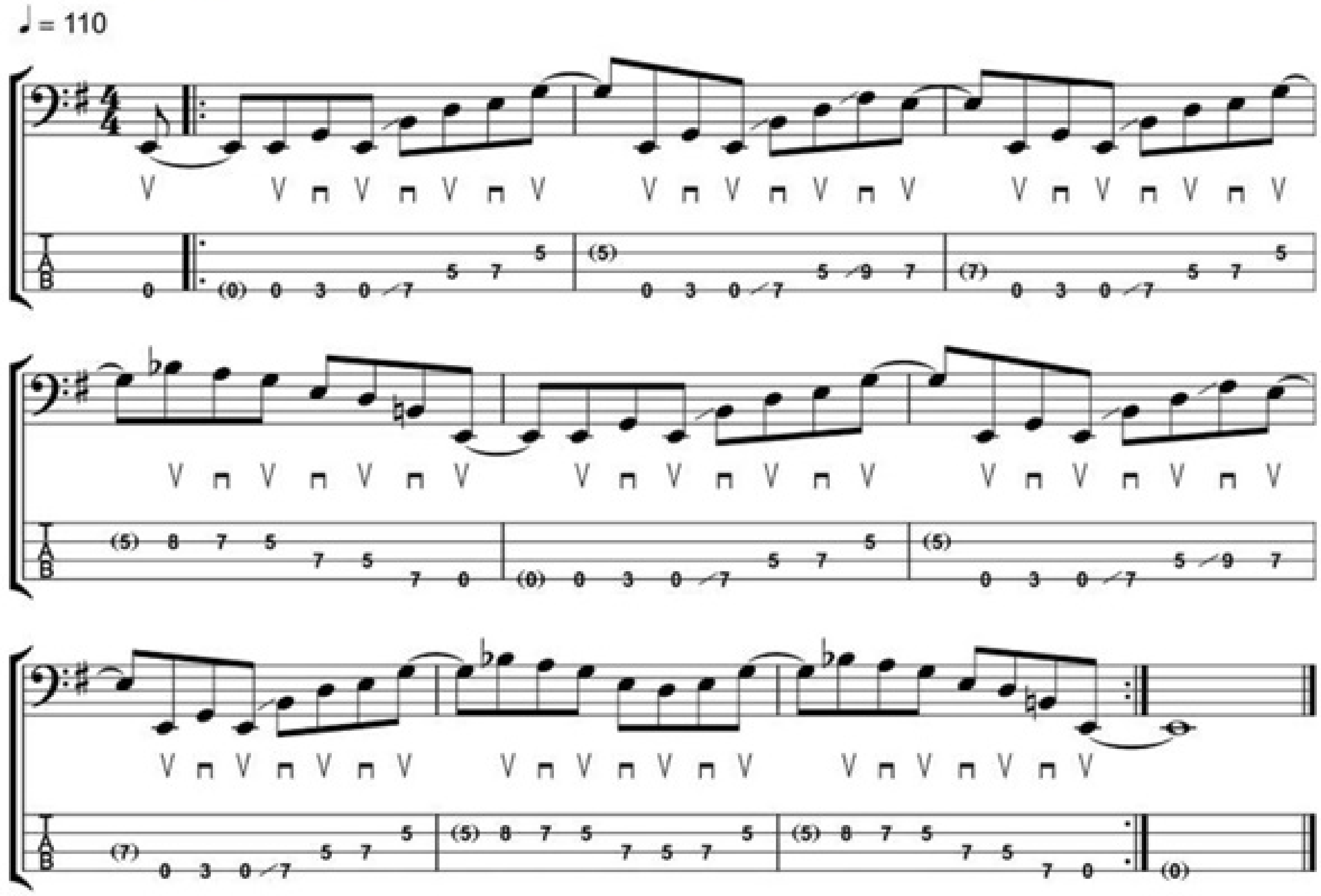
EXAMPLE 6



EXAMPLE 7



EXAMPLE 8



Example 9

This is a rock bass-line with a slightly quicker tempo. There are tied notes at the beginning of each bar, and you'll notice that this is another line that begins with an anacrusis. This time the anacrusis is just one quaver, so it begins on the upbeat of the fourth beat.

Example 10

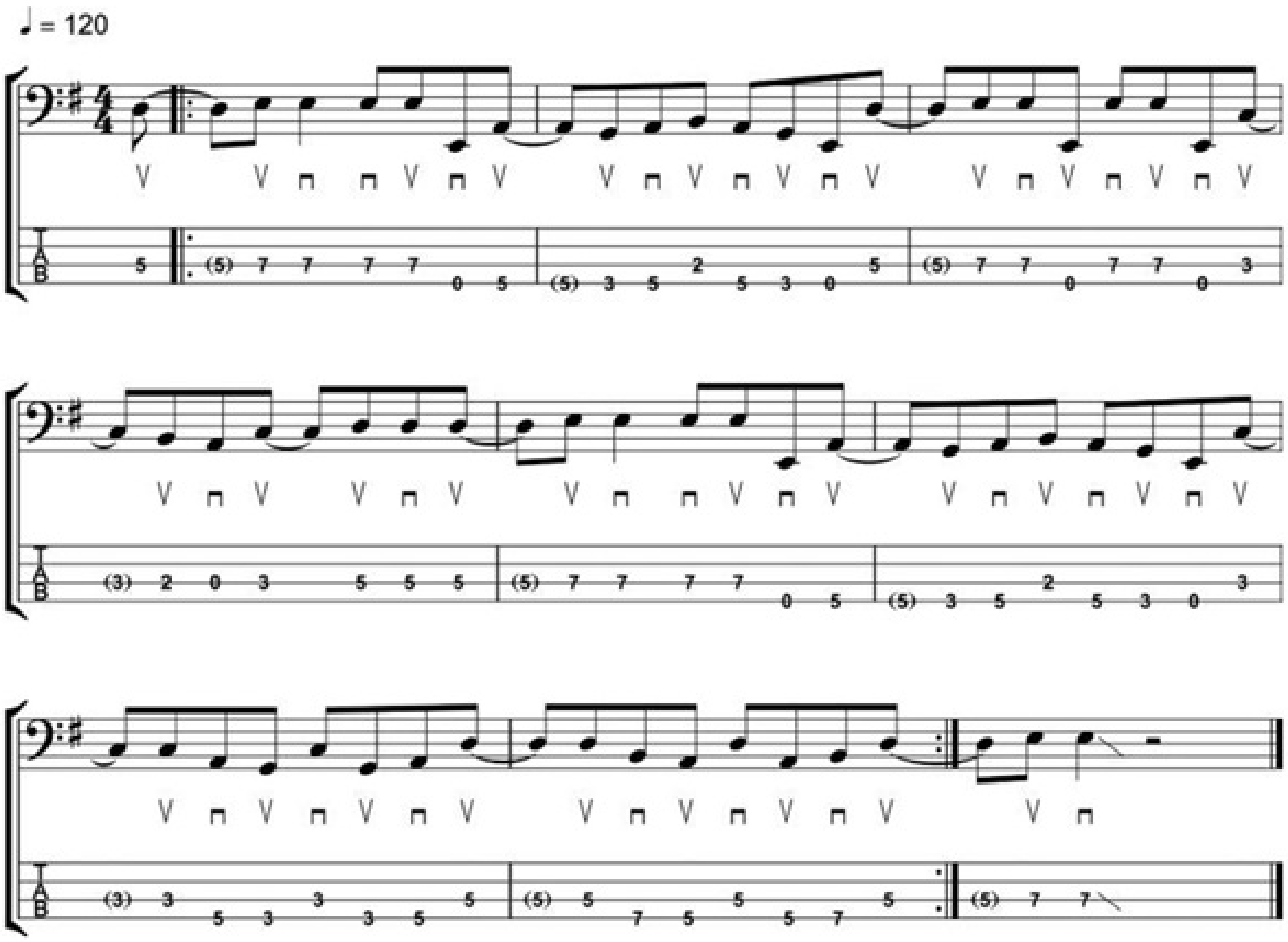
This exercise is a little quicker again, although as with all of the exercises featured in this instalment, you should feel free to play it at a much slower tempo to begin with if needed. Upstrokes also feature heavily in this line.

This month's instalment has introduced you to another important element of the alternate picking technique. Hopefully you can see that by employing silent downstrokes you will be able to keep playing downbeats with downstrokes and upbeats with upstrokes.

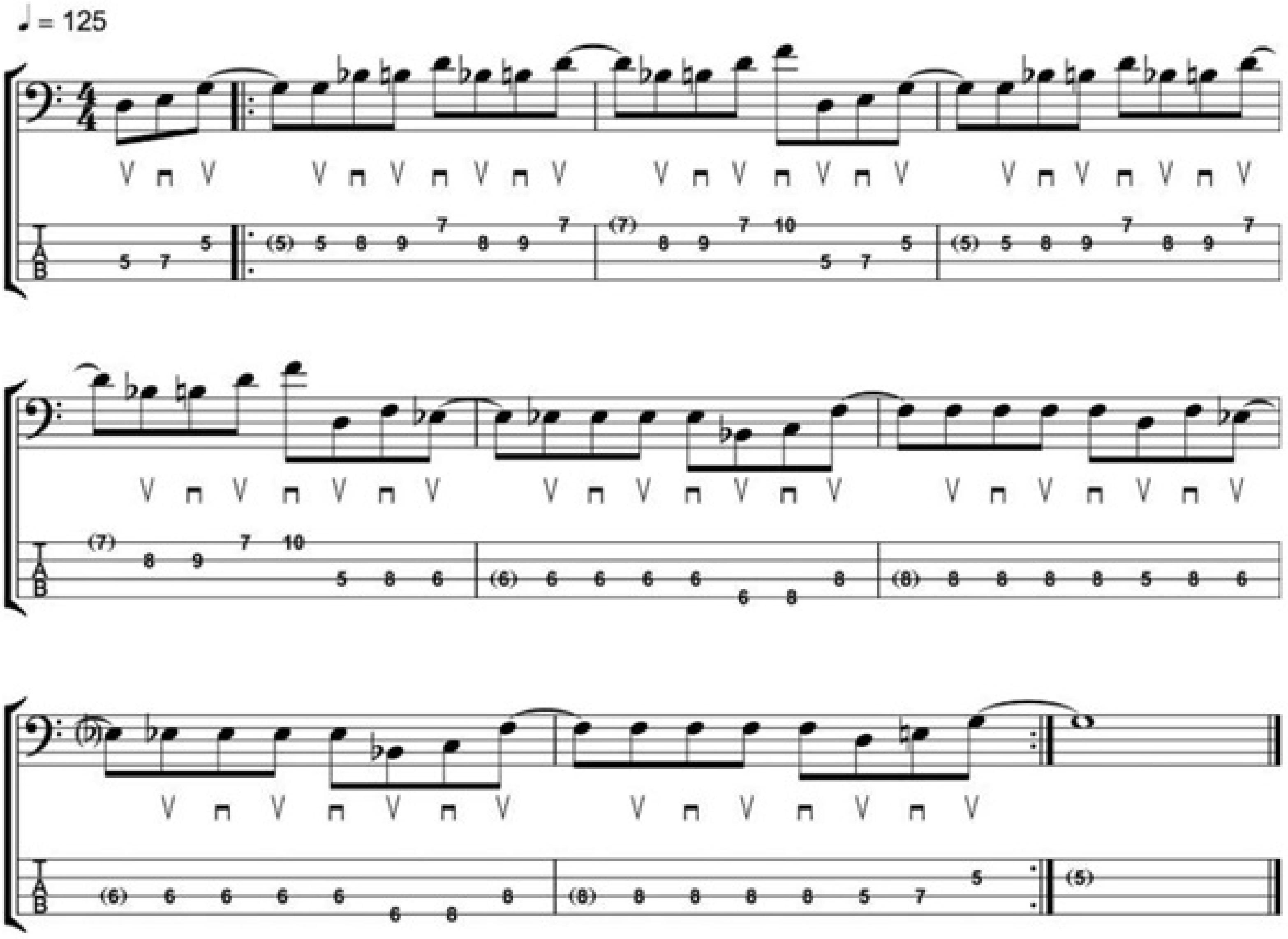
By the time you've successfully managed to play all of the exercises in this column you will have made great progress in learning to use the plectrum in the most effective way. The concepts covered here are crucial tools for enabling you to play anything with a plectrum that you would play with your fingers.

Next month we'll be taking things up a gear and making a start on semiquaver rhythms – strap yourselves in!

EXAMPLE 9



EXAMPLE 10



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PHIL MANN

Advanced Tutorial

Ready for the ultimate bass workout? The great Mann himself is here to guide you into advanced territory

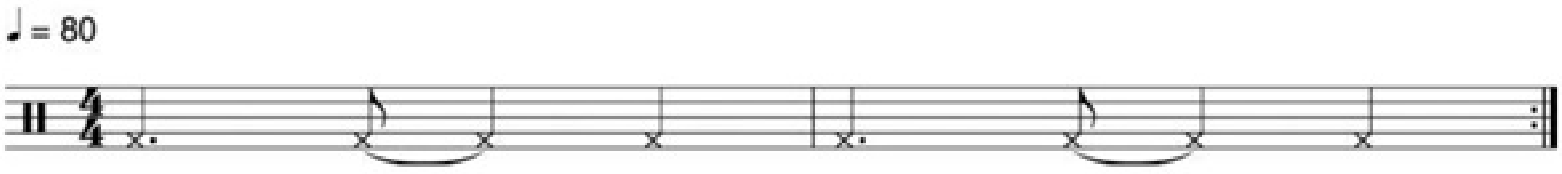
The life of a touring musician is a diverse one, continually being confronted with an extensive list of career positives and negatives. Personally, one of the highlights of my touring career has been the opportunity to learn from a colossal amount of diverse musical influences, gathered from all around the globe. On that note, let's examine Latin music, a term which covers numerous components of the Afro-Cuban genre such as bossa nova, mambo, merengue, samba and partido alto to name but a few. In each instance, as with the western styles you're familiar with, a variety of components identify each style's signature characteristics, which commonly draw influence from the various geographic regions in which they originated.

The most prolific, and simplest, of all Afro-Cuban rhythms is traditionally performed on a tumbao drum. It's this rhythmic pattern that then becomes recycled and conveyed on the bass guitar, delivered using melodic passages containing predominantly root and fifth patterns. Example 1 introduces this all-important rhythm.

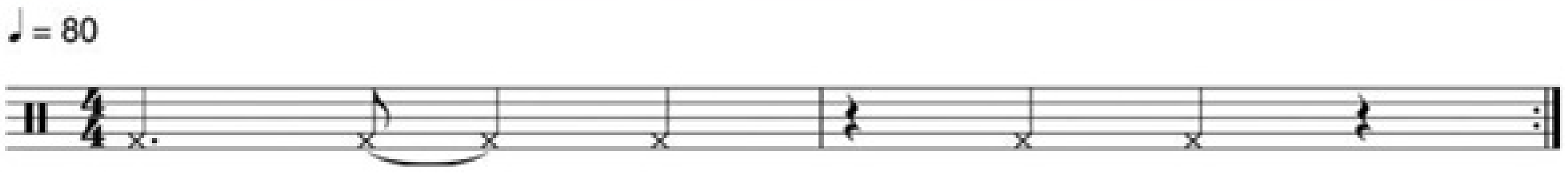
Examples 1 and 2

Generally, all Afro-Cuban styles contain a specific rhythmic figure that underscores all arrangements and compositions, creating a heartbeat upon which all the other melodic and harmonic elements are built. This rhythm is referred to as a 'clave' and in today's studies you're going to be introduced to the 'son' clave, the first of two traditional rhythms that have significant importance. The son (3:2) clave is identified by the last note of bar one residing on beat four (son = 'on' the beat!). Tap your foot to the rhythm notated in Example 2.

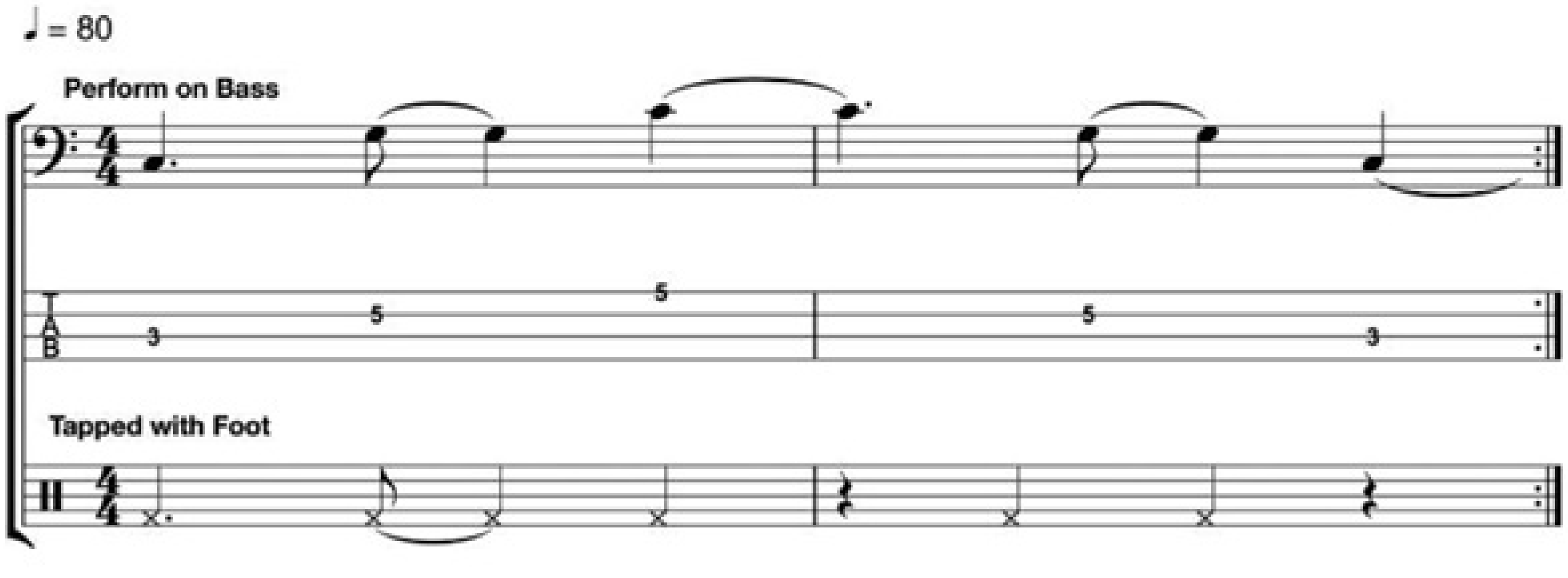
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



Example 3

Example 3 may prove surprisingly difficult to execute. Why? Well, I'm going to ask you to play a simple root and fifth bass-line while simultaneously tapping the aforementioned son clave with your foot. If independence exercises are not your forte, this is going to prove very difficult to master, primarily because your foot will have the tendency to want to follow your fingers, instead of doing what it's actually being required to do! You'll notice that the rhythmic information encountered in Example 1 has

now been conveyed as melodic information and delivered over a two-bar figure. The methodology of tying together the last beat of bar one and the first beat of bar two produces a common rhythmical variant to the standard tumbao, referred to as a syncopated tumbao. Try the following exercise with, and without, the tie.

Example 4

Hopefully, you'll have noticed in the last exercise that your foot is in fact working in unison with your hands throughout bar one. These coinciding notes, which fall on the fourth quaver of the bar (called the 'bombo') as well as the notes placed on beat four (named the 'ponche'), help generate stability in the groove. This then later becomes syncopated and opposing in the second bar.

Revisiting the left hand slap studies of previous *BGM* instalments, Example 4 combines our established technical abilities with today's introduction to Afro-Cuban rhythms. The bass Jedi among you should be continuing to attempt to execute all of the succeeding melodic exercises, while simultaneously attempting to tap a son clave with your foot.

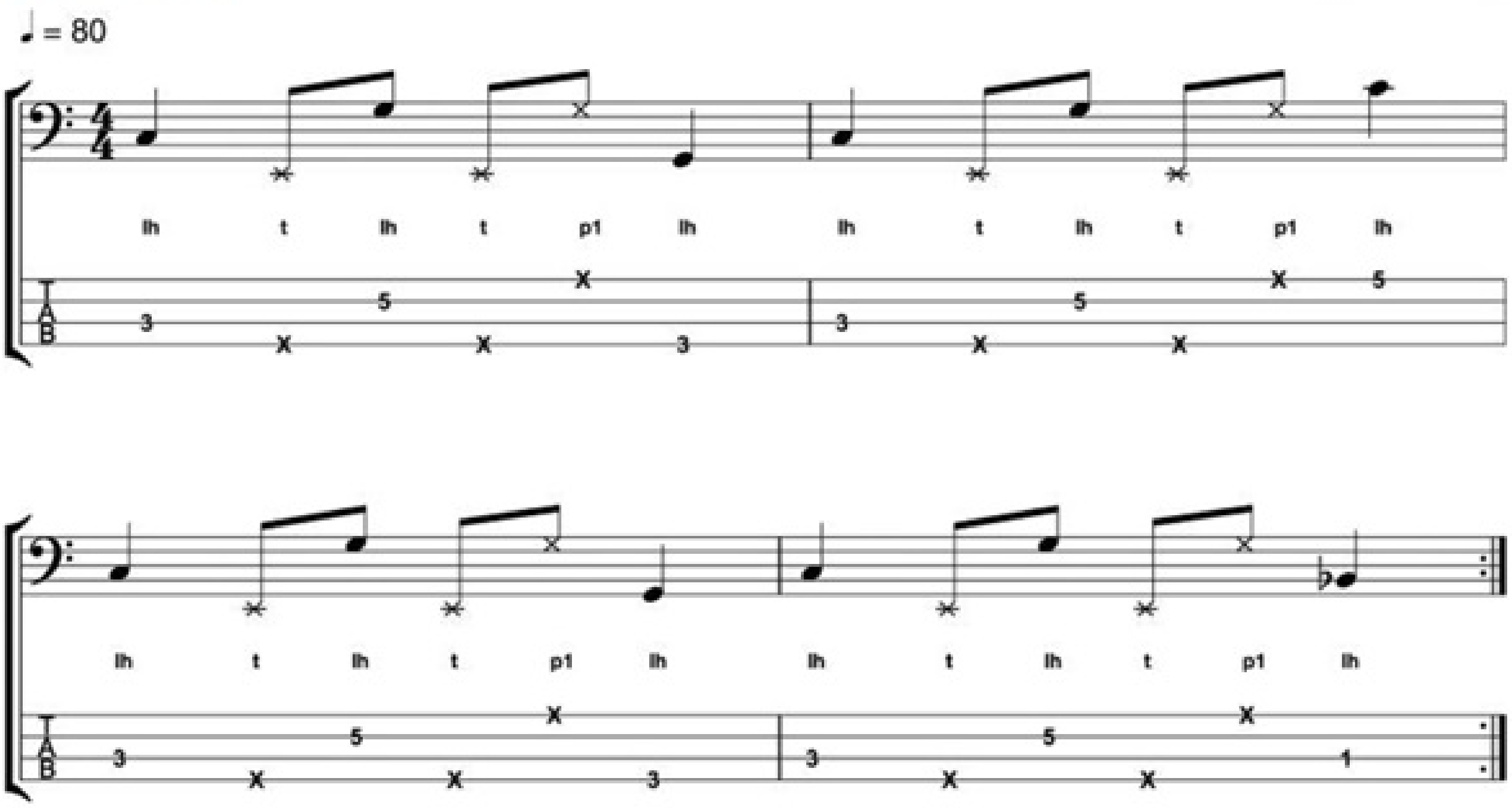
Example 5

Continuing to expand on the principles of Example 4, our next study modulates the tumbao rhythm between two tonal centres of C and D. Be careful when confronting the final bar before the repeat, as you'll encounter a quaver triplet that's reminiscent of a Victor Wooten-style 'open-hammer' – with an additional thumbed upstroke added for good measure!

Example 6

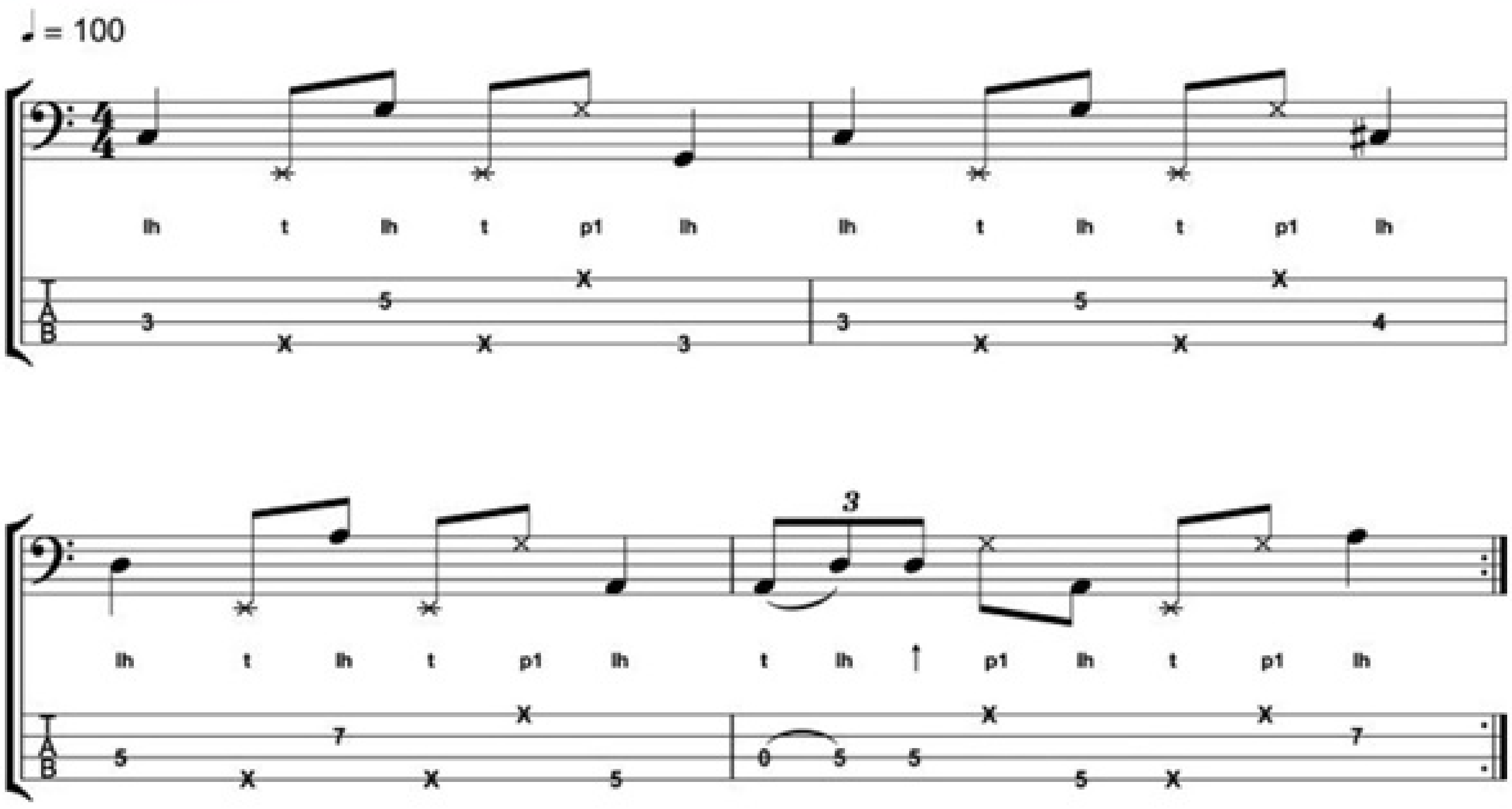
Example 6 modulates our studies into the key of E major, incorporating our tumbao rhythm into a I-IV chord progression. In this instance, extra attention may need to be given to the semiquaver triplets that reside at the end of bar three, as they are executed using a combination of thumbed and double plucked notes on the D and G strings respectively.

EXAMPLE 4



"PERSONALLY, ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF MY TOURING CAREER HAS BEEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM A COLOSSAL AMOUNT OF DIVERSE MUSICAL INFLUENCES, GATHERED FROM ALL AROUND THE GLOBE. ON THAT NOTE, LET'S EXAMINE LATIN MUSIC, A TERM WHICH COVERS NUMEROUS COMPONENTS OF THE AFRO-CUBAN GENRE SUCH AS BOSSA NOVA, MAMBO, MERENGUE, SAMBA AND PARTIDO ALTO TO NAME BUT A FEW"

EXAMPLE 5



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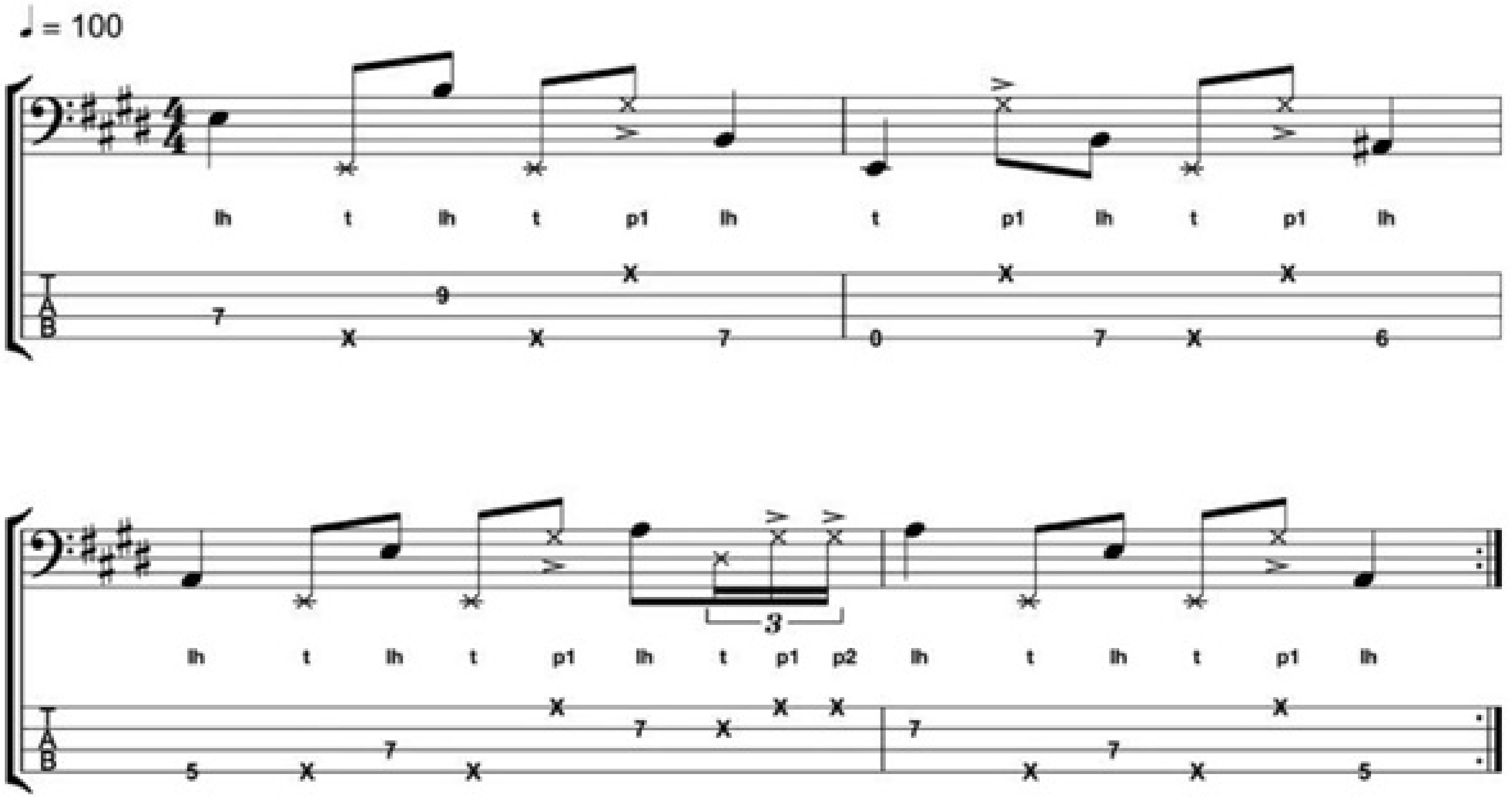
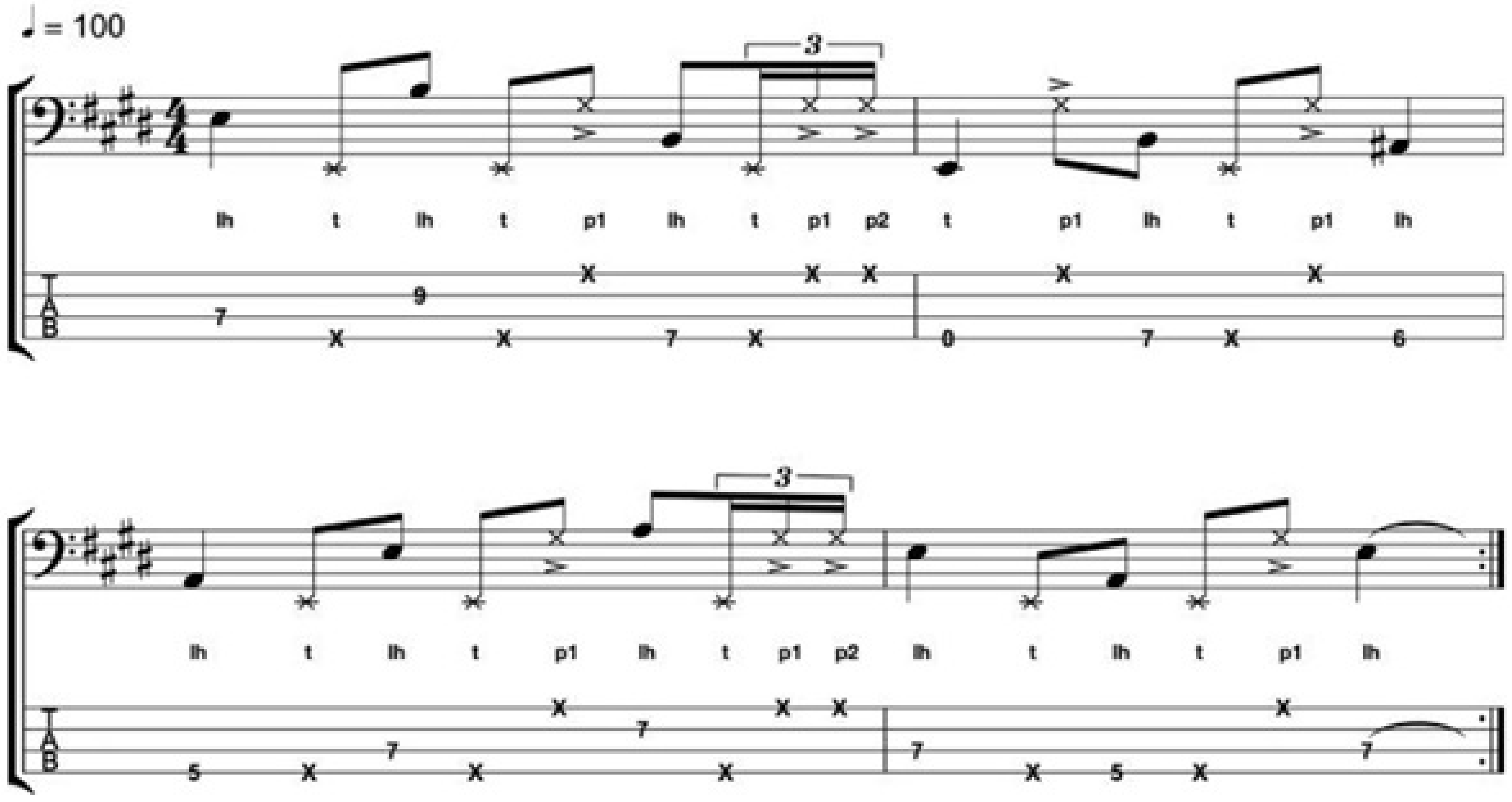
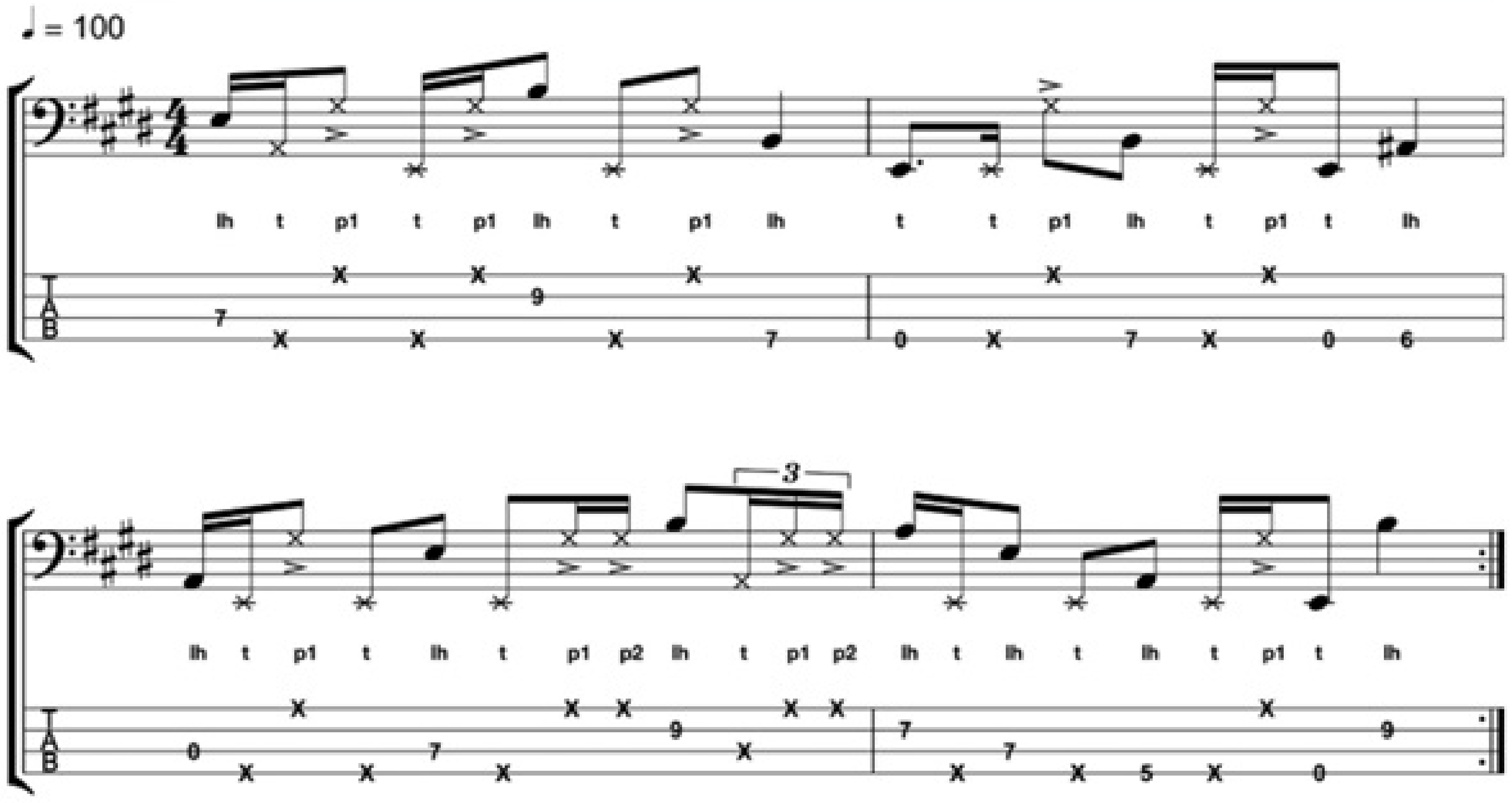


EXAMPLE 7



EXAMPLE 8



"IN LATIN MUSIC, RHYTHM IS BIBLICAL"

Phil lays down the law at the London Bass Guitar Show, back in March

Example 7

This month's penultimate exercise demonstrates that advanced studies are not always about how many notes you play. Taking influence from the aforementioned syncopated 'Bombo-Ponche' tumbao, notice that on the final beat of the last bar the crotchet becomes tied to the first beat of bar one. As a result, you're not going to be required to play the initial downbeat in bar one on the repeat. Just wait until you try to simultaneously tap the son clave. I can assure you that your foot and brain will decide that it's no longer necessary to communicate with one another...

Example 8

Was that last one tricky enough? Let's finish this month's column with a bang. Our final exercise takes the traditional interpretation of the tumbao rhythm and envelops it with a number of modern contemporary garnishes. As we're still moving between the tonal centres of E and A, you'll need to pay particular attention to the semiquaver subdivisions being delivered throughout, as they do vary somewhat.

In Latin music, rhythm is biblical, so ensure that your timing is immaculate! Happy shredding!

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Classic BASS ALBUMS

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Mike Brooks looks back at INXS's finest hour, Kick

Over the next three Classic Albums columns, we'll look at albums that are celebrating their 30th anniversaries this year. All of these were mega-selling releases and defined their band or artist, although their success was never replicated.

Kick was the Australian rockers INXS's sixth album, released in late 1987. The INXS snowball had been gathering momentum through the 80s, but 1988 was when they hit the bullseye, Michael Hutchence's smouldering sexuality combining with the band's musicianship and catching the ear of the casual music listener. The album didn't sell well until the band executed a 16-month world tour and released the single 'Need You Tonight', which reached number one in the US: suddenly, the rest of the world took notice and the blue touchpaper was lit. Between 1988 and 1989, it seemed as if INXS was everyone's favourite band, and *Kick* was on rotation everywhere. It went on to sell nearly 20 million copies.

Bassist Garry Gary Beers was and remains a highly capable groove merchant, fusing rock, pop, funk and dance rhythms: his work with drummer Jon Farriss is exemplary. Although occasionally seen with G&L basses, for the recording of *Kick* and most of his career with INXS, Beers was a walking advert for Fender Precision basses, strung with Rotosound Swing Bass roundwounds and hooked up to Ampeg rigs.

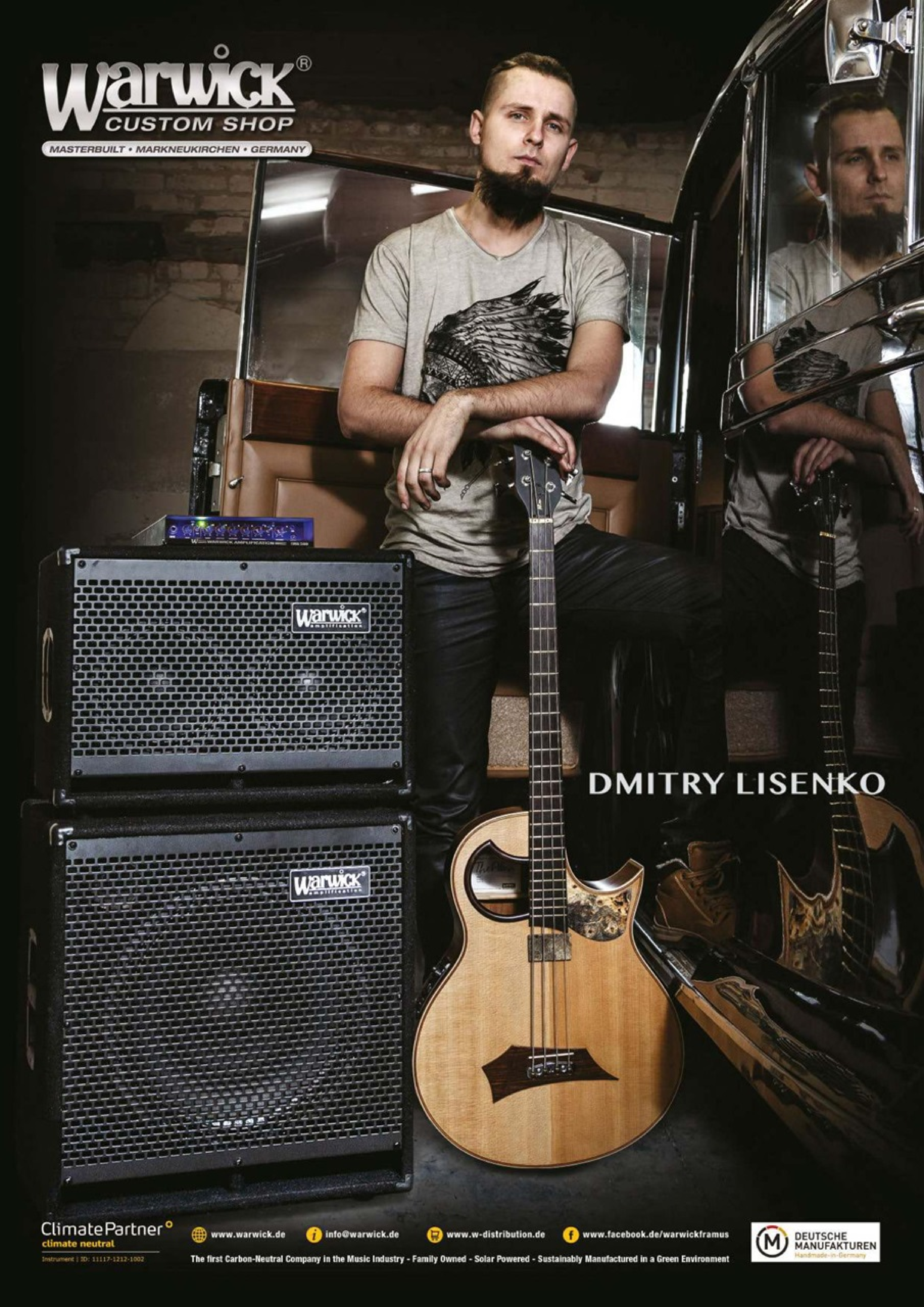
Electronic drums and power chords signal the album-opener 'Guns In The Sky', Hutchence's vocal spitting across the track, before we get to the jangly-guitared 'New Sensation', where Beers' pedalled bass-line provides the drive and foundation for the rest of the band's groove-laden rock/pop hybrid. 'Devil Inside' was the album's second single and is the perfect foil for Hutchence's sensual vocal delivery, not unlike Jim Morrison's performance 20 years previously. Throughout the album, you can hear that the band are upping their game and taking on modern technology – especially when it came to rhythms – to reinforce their guitar-heavy sound.

'Need You Tonight' really needs no introduction: it's a classic single if ever there was one, and remains the band's signature tune. Sparse yet busy, electronic but organic, it reached the top of the charts in the US and around the world – and suddenly, INXS were cool! 'Never Tear Us Apart', like 'Need You Tonight', has become a classic in its own right, which is why so many bands cover it. Beers' picked Precision tone stands out in all its glory, as it does on the final single 'Mystify', rounded and punchy with some split-coil grit.

'Kick', with its horn-laden entry, is swept along by Beers' constantly moving bass-line in the verses, which reverts to a pedalling line in the chorus to make way for Kirk Pengilly's colourful sax playing. 'Calling All Nations' and 'Tiny Daggers' are excellent illustrations of the band's ability to mix clean and distorted guitar parts with great effectiveness – this was a strong element in the band's signature sound.

INXS rode the crest of a popular wave from 1988 to 1991, climaxing with a triumphant show at Wembley Stadium. Like many bands, they suffered at the hands of grunge in the 90s and following the death of Michael Hutchence in 1997, the band were never able to repeat their earlier success. Let *Kick* serve as a record of how great they were...

> "THE ALBUM DIDN'T SELL WELL UNTIL THE BAND EXECUTED A 16-MONTH WORLD TOUR AND RELEASED THE SINGLE 'NEED YOU TONIGHT', WHICH REACHED NUMBER ONE IN THE US"



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